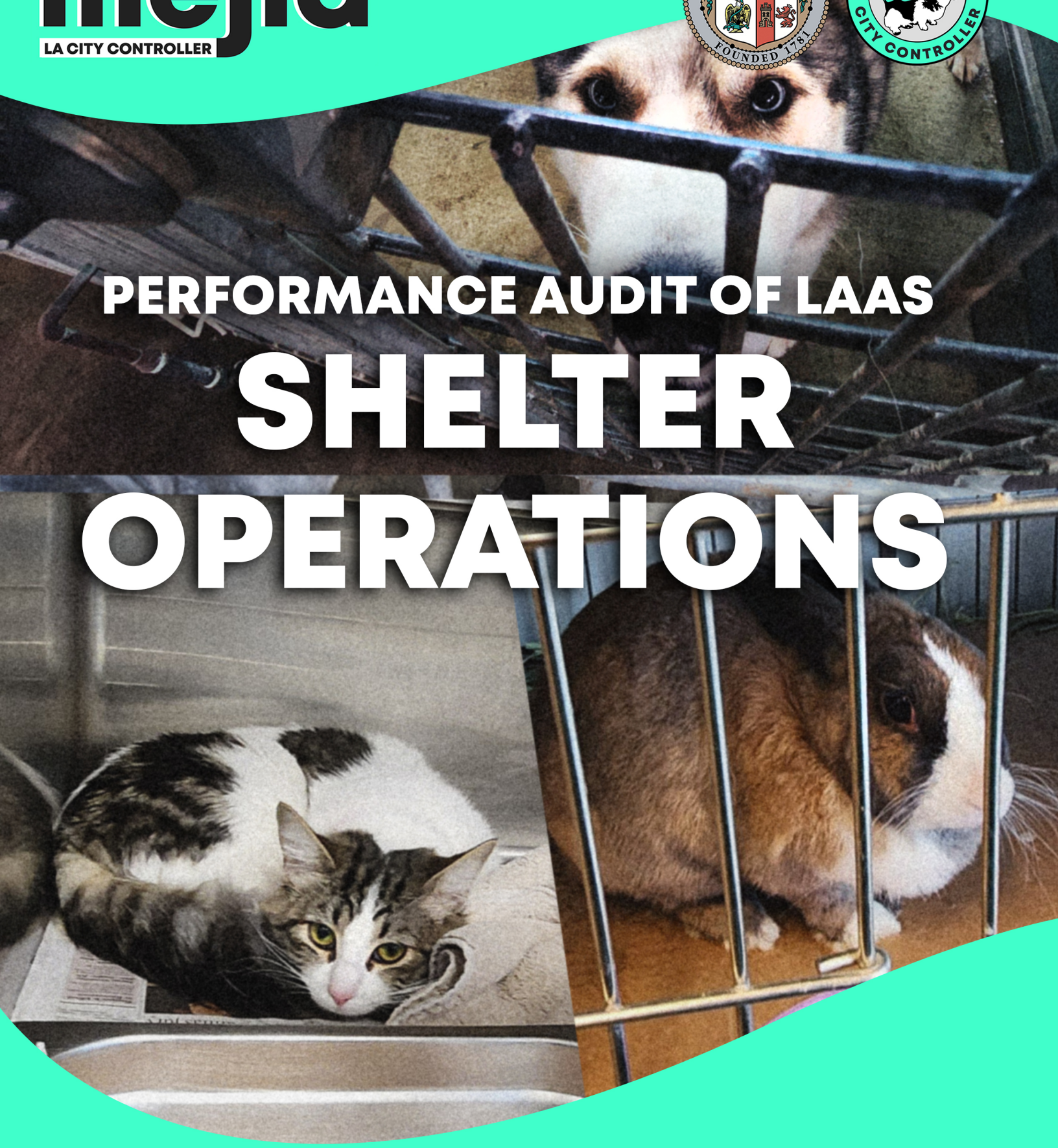
kenneth mejia
LA CITY CONTROLLER



PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF LAAS

SHELTER OPERATIONS

October 21, 2026

Honorable Karen Bass, Mayor
Honorable Hydee Feldstein Soto, City Attorney
Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council

Re: Performance Audit of Los Angeles Animals Services (LAAS) Shelter Operations

"Creating a Humane LA" is the service theme of the City's Department of Animal Services (LAAS). However, the current animal welfare crisis in the City has reduced this motto to a mere aspiration instead of a practical reality. For years, the Department has been severely underfunded with consecutive budget cuts. During the past few years of budget proposals, LAAS was at risk of three shelters getting eliminated and defunded to the point that medical supplies, animal food, and canine enrichment were cut from the budget and left to the mercy of donations.

As a result of the City's lack of investment in LAAS, the Department is unable to carry out its goal to promote and protect the health, safety, and welfare of animals and people. Nowhere is this more evident than in the animal shelters operated by the Department.

Chronic understaffing combined with increased animal intake and fewer resources to provide basic care and enrichment create an environment that is neither safe nor humane. Dogs deteriorate in their kennels in part due to not being walked for days or even weeks on end. This can result in lower chances of adoption, longer stays in the shelter, and declining health, which can expose staff and volunteers to potentially dangerous situations resulting in bites or, in the worst cases, maulings.

In the spirit of LAAS' service theme, the Department's stated mission is to "promote and protect the health, safety, and welfare of animals and people in Los Angeles." To accomplish that mission, the City has entrusted the Department with several responsibilities, including but not limited to:

- Operating animal shelters across the City;
- Operating adoption services;
- Investigating allegations of animal abuse and other animal welfare concerns;
- Responding to reports of dangerous or nuisance animals, and impounding animals when necessary; and
- Animal licensing and permit issuance for animal establishments

The management of the City's animal shelter system is viewed as LAAS' most critical and legally mandated function, as it operates six shelters serving approximately 60,000 animals. In recent years, the shelter system has experienced severe crowding. This overcrowding has led to scathing criticism of the Department and costly litigation for the City due to the dangerous conditions that the overcrowding creates for the animals, as well as staff and volunteers.

Our Office sought to bring an unparalleled level of transparency and technical expertise to the City's animal shelter system by conducting (1) a performance audit on LAAS shelter management, which focused on shelter capacity, shelter resources, and the effectiveness of certain business management

functions and (2) a highly technical and robust evaluation on LAAS animal shelter operations in partnership with JVR Strategies.

The enclosed report details the results of our performance audit. Our Office conducted this performance audit to evaluate LAAS' capacity to care for the volume of animals entering its shelters relative to its current resources during the scope period of Fiscal Year 2021 through Fiscal Year 2025. Our auditors also examined key administrative functions and potential strategies for the department to increase its resources through improved revenue collection processes.

We found that LAAS has a rather difficult mandate for the resources allocated to the Department. By law, LAAS must provide humane care to animals in its shelters. In addition, City policymakers established a goal to achieve a 90% "save rate" for dogs and cats. However, the department's limited space, funding, and staffing make it impossible to both provide humane care and maintain the 90% save rate.

For the scope period, our auditors found that LAAS receives far more animals than the City's shelter system can handle, that the shelters are forced to operate under enormous stress, and that this overburdened shelter system negatively impacts the welfare of the animals while also putting immeasurable pressure and strain on LAAS employees and volunteers. In short, LAAS lacks adequate resources and policies to effectively and humanely carry out its shelter operation duties, including its foremost duty to care for animals.

Key Findings

- LAAS receives more animals than the shelter system can handle and shelters have been **operating well beyond kennel capacity**.
- **Shelter staffing is insufficient** based on kennel capacity and population levels.
- **LAAS' standard operating procedures** comply with the law but **do not always align with best practices** intended to protect animal welfare.
- Until recently, **LAAS did not have codified euthanasia determination policies**
- The **dog licensing rate in the City is low**, which results in **less revenue for the City**, and **an inability to confirm that pet owners are vaccinating dogs** to protect against rabies.
- Both **LAAS staff and volunteers reported that tension** between the two groups can create a **difficult work environment for all involved**.
- The **volunteer program does not have a system to ensure** that volunteer **discipline is being applied in a fair, consistent manner**.
- **Oversight of microchips is insufficient**, increasing their risk of being lost or misused.

Key Recommendations

- Establish a policy limiting the intake of animals voluntarily surrendered by their owners when a shelter is at a capacity where it can no longer provide adequate care.
- Develop a recruiting, hiring, and funding plan allowing the department to maintain an animal care staffing level consistent with best practices.
- **Conduct a review of standard operating procedures and establish or update them to ensure alignment with industry best practices.**
- **Clarify procedures within the department's At-Risk Dog Protocol that pertain to space-based euthanasia determinations**
- Identify veterinary service providers that are not submitting vaccination certificate information and **educate those veterinary service providers about reporting requirements**, and evaluate the long-term feasibility of **allowing veterinarians to issue dog licenses.**

- LAAS should take steps to understand volunteer concerns, solicit ideas and feedback, and **foster improved working relationships between volunteers and LAAS employees.**
- Develop a **policy for volunteer discipline** that includes fact finding requirements, penalty ranges, and factors for consideration when making discipline determinations.
- **Update microchip management procedures** to ensure the department can monitor microchip inventory and usage.

The safety and well being of every person and animal within the City of Los Angeles should be of utmost importance to our leaders, lawmakers, and stakeholders. LAAS was created to ensure that our City can–if nothing else–care for and save the lives of animals that make their way into our shelters. The City must equip LAAS with appropriate staffing and budgetary allocations commensurate with the Department's mission to maintain a humane LA.

As a City, we must make firm commitments to invest in our City's animals. During the past two budget cycles (FY26 and FY27), the proposed budgets had significant reductions that would have affected basic operations of the shelters. For FY26, staff was reduced so drastically that only 3 shelters would have been able to operate. And for the proposed FY27 budget, the medical supplies and animal food budgets were defunded completely with those items to be provided dependent on the kindness of donors to provide these basic essentials. Although all of these proposed cuts would ultimately be restored in the final approved budgets, albeit to inadequate levels of funding, these core services should never have been subject to the annual budget ritual, risking the actual safety and well-being of animals and people.

The City should also invest in a robust spay and neuter program accessible and affordable to all Angelenos, to reduce the number of animals that enter our shelters.

We will continue to push for the City to invest in its animals and continue to provide transparency and accountability to ensure the City and LAAS both live up to their missions of creating a humane LA for all.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Mejia

Kenneth Mejia, CPA
City Controller

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Executive Summary

The Los Angeles Department of Animal Services (LAAS) operates six animal shelters spread across the City. The department was responsible for the care of over 48,000 animals taken in during Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, 89% of which were cats and dogs. The large majority of these animals were strays (58%) and owner surrenders (24%). The budget appropriation for LAAS was $30 million in FY 2025, with approximately half of the adopted budget allocated for LAAS shelter operations and animal care, including providing food, cleaning, and medical services. The total budget for LAAS, including indirect costs like employee benefits and facilities, was $61 million.

LAAS shelters have experienced severe crowding in recent years and have been the subject of local news coverage critical of the department's operations. This persistent crowding contributes to dangerous conditions for animals, staff, and volunteers, and there is a lack of adequate staffing to manage the animal population. Many shelter systems across the country are struggling with similar challenges, but the magnitude of the problem is particularly acute in Los Angeles.

It is therefore critical that LAAS has the right tools and strategies in place to effectively and humanely carry out its duties. This performance audit evaluates LAAS' capacity to care for the volume of animals entering its shelters relative to its current resources, covering the scope period of FY 2021 through FY 2025. In addition, we examined several key administrative functions and potential strategies for the department to increase its resources through improved revenue collection processes. We will also publish a subsequent evaluation of the protocols, systems, and facilities in place to provide care to animals. Audit Services is conducting this evaluation in conjunction with a veterinary consultant that specializes in animal shelter management.

What We Found

LAAS has one of the most difficult missions in the City—to provide humane care to shelter animals and strive to achieve a save rate of at least 90% for dogs and cats. However, **LAAS receives more animals than the shelter system can handle, and without adequate staffing and policies in place to address crowding, City shelters have been forced to operate under an enormous amount of stress in recent years. Overburdened animal shelters negatively impact the welfare of animals, and put considerable levels of strain on shelter employees and volunteers.** While the City should continue to save as many animals as possible, it must care for animals in a responsible, humane manner. Key to this is ensuring the shelter environment allows employees and volunteers to feel safe and productive.

The department has been operating beyond its capacity, which is inconsistent with best practices. The department currently accepts all owner surrendered animals regardless of shelter capacity constraints, which can increase the risk of animal suffering, or animals receiving inadequate levels of care.

Several of the department's key administrative and business functions are also ineffective or outdated, and require improvements.

- LAAS Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are outdated and no longer reflect current operations, which limits employees' access to relevant, up-to-date guidance on operating shelters.
- The department's ability to enforce dog licensing requirements has been limited, which results in unlicensed dogs in the City and potentially millions of dollars in lost revenue.
- The department does not have a formal system for ensuring the consistent application of Volunteer Rules and Code of Conduct guidelines.
- LAAS oversight of animal microchips is insufficient, which increases the risk of microchips being lost or misused.

LAAS Policies Comply with Relevant Laws, But Are Outdated and Do Not Align with Best Practices

LAAS has over 160 SOPs covering departmental operations, including animal shelter operations, enforcement of animal laws and regulations, and administrative programs. We found that **LAAS SOPs address the relevant sections of the California Food and Agriculture Code, which establishes requirements for public animal shelters in the state.** For example, state law requires that stray dogs and cats must be held for four days before being put up for adoption, a practice which is also mandated and detailed in an LAAS SOP.

In addition to state law, the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) Guidelines for the Standards of Care in Animal Shelters is a widely recognized standard for the care and welfare of animals in shelters. **We found that LAAS' SOPs do not always align with ASV guidelines intended to protect animal welfare.** For example, ASV recommends that shelters should only accept an animal if they are able to provide suitable, humane care. However, LAAS policy is to accept animals surrendered by owners even when a shelter is overcapacity, and struggling to provide care to the existing animal population.

We also found that in addition to being out of date, some of the department's animal shelter SOPs do not always reflect current operations and practices. Many of the SOPs have not been updated in about 15 years. Modernizing its policies, including the consolidation of related

policies and the elimination of obsolete policies, would promote efficiency and improve the quality of care provided to shelter animals.

Shelters Have Been Consistently Crowded

There are 737 kennels for dogs and 340 kennels for cats across the City's shelter system. **Between FY 2021 and FY 2025 the intake of dogs grew 98%, while the intake of cats grew 39%. LAAS shelters have operated consistently beyond their capacity, and when crowding was at its worst, the shelters operated at more than twice the capacity for dogs and more than four times the capacity for cats.** During a peak in 2023 and 2024, animals had to share kennels and pop up crates filled shelter hallways to attempt to accommodate the vast number of animals. Crowding harms animals by creating a stressful environment, and limiting opportunities for enrichment, such as dog playgroups. This can result in animals deteriorating physically and mentally. Crowding at LAAS shelters contributed to an unsafe environment for staff and volunteers, and contributed to safety incidents. In 2024, the State of California cited and fined the LAAS Harbor shelter for "failing to evaluate and correct overcrowding at their animal shelter, which resulted in animal attacks and bites on employees."

Despite staff and volunteers' best efforts, when shelters are experiencing extreme crowding, LAAS has few options to address a growing population. LAAS is required by law to accept stray dogs, but not owner surrendered animals. Unlike other jurisdictions contending with shelter crowding, LAAS does not have a protocol in place to limit owner surrendered animals when they are over capacity.

Since 2012, LAAS has strived to become a "no-kill" shelter, which means 90% of animals have an outcome other than euthanasia or death from non-euthanasia causes. By 2020 the department reached this goal, up from a save rate of 56%, a significant achievement. However, the goal to stay within this no-kill rate may contribute to dangerous crowding levels because the department feels unable to euthanize animals when necessary, such as euthanasia for safety or medical reasons. There are times where the shelters may need to dip below the no-kill goal to ensure they do not operate beyond their capacity for care.

Shelter Staffing is Not Sufficient

LAAS Animal Care Technicians (ACTs) are the frontline employees responsible for feeding and cleaning animals, and cleaning kennels. ACTs also work directly with the public to support the department's adoption efforts. LAAS has requested additional funding during recent budget cycles to increase the number of ACTs on staff, but the City ultimately did not provide the requested budget and staffing level.

We used the National Animal Care and Control Association's (NACA) Formula for Determining Kennel Staffing Needs to estimate the necessary staffing level for City shelters. **In FY 2026 LAAS had 75 ACTs who were designated for animal care during the day shift. Using the NACA formula, LAAS should have at least 90 staff responsible for animal care, based on the department's kennel capacity.** The NACA formula only accounts for the time needed for feeding and cleaning, and does not include time needed for animal enrichment and exercise, activities which ASV stresses are essential for animals.

The staffing gap becomes even more stark when using the daily population numbers from the height of shelter crowding. During this period, LAAS had an average daily population of 2,162 cats and dogs. The NACA formula suggests that LAAS should have had 185 animal care staff to adequately care for this population level—more than double the number of animal care ACTs on staff as of September 2025. Given the inability to meet those staffing levels, it is essential that LAAS and the City take steps to prevent crowding from reaching dire levels.

LAAS Enforcement of Dog Licensing Requirements is Limited

State and City law requires every dog in Los Angeles to be licensed, a measure that is in part intended to ensure dogs are vaccinated against rabies, and to make it easier to reunite lost animals with their owners. LAAS administers these licenses, charging $20 for a one-year license and $55 for a three-year license for a dog that is spayed or neutered. **Dog owners receive one notice before a license expires, and one notice after the license expires. If the owner still does not renew the license, LAAS stops following up and the owner is no longer contacted.** Between FY 2021 and FY 2025, LAAS sent out 71,128 license renewal notifications for one-year licenses which owners failed to respond to, and 8,790 notifications for three-year licenses which owners failed to respond to.

Between FY 2021 and FY 2025, the number of dog licenses issued by the department steadily decreased. The number of one-year licenses issued by the department decreased 40%, from 60,692 licenses to 36,145 licenses. The number of three-year licenses dropped 18%, from 3,423 to 2,822. Based on US Census data and pet ownership statistics, we estimate there are around 600,000 dogs in the City. **These estimates indicate the City may be missing out on up to $14.1 million in license revenue, which highlights the need for improved licensing enforcement.**

One method LAAS can use to identify unlicensed dogs is through veterinary offices. The Los Angeles Municipal Code requires that all veterinarians send in proof of rabies vaccine certificates to the department. However, **only 26 veterinary offices (out of the 379 offices that are registered within the City) regularly submit vaccine certificates, or are planning to**

begin submitting the information to the City. By increasing enforcement of this law, LAAS can also increase compliance with the City's dog licensing requirements.

The Shelter Volunteer Program Needs Improvement

LAAS has a large, dedicated volunteer force of about 1,000 monthly volunteers who worked a total of 137,928 hours in 2024. Volunteers provide an invaluable resource to LAAS in delivering care to animals. Whether providing enrichment to animals, supporting staff in cleaning and feeding, providing adoption counseling, or promoting animals on social media, the volunteers are an important part of the City's animal shelter system.

Each volunteer agrees to abide by the Volunteer Rules and Guidelines, which consists of 21 requirements that establish parameters for acceptable volunteer behavior. They are also subject to the City of Los Angeles Workplace Equity Policy, which prohibits abusive conduct and bullying, among other requirements. While most volunteers adhere to these guidelines, there have been instances of violations where volunteers have harassed or threatened staff, interfered with animal adoptions, and failed to report dog bite incidents. **We found that the department does not have a documented volunteer discipline protocol outlining specific steps to take and associated consequences, which can result in inconsistent enforcement of the rules and contributes to tension between staff and volunteers.**

Oversight of Animal Microchips is Insufficient

A microchip is a device which is implanted in an animal and contains a unique identifier associated with the name and contact information of their owner. LAAS staff scan each dog, cat, and rabbit that enters the shelter. If the animal does not have the microchip, LAAS will implant a chip prior to an adoption, as required by state law. LAAS orders microchips in bulk every three to four years, and distributes them to the shelters as needed. We found that LAAS does not have an inventory system to track the usage of microchips, and that the protocols in place to accurately track microchip transactions during the adoption process need improvement.

What We Recommend

LAAS should take steps to improve its processes for managing animal population levels, and enhance the overall effectiveness of its animal care and administrative management functions. To improve shelter operations and animal care, LAAS should:

- **Conduct a review of existing SOPs with the goal of updating existing policies** to accurately reflect LAAS' current operations and address potential gaps. This process should ensure alignment with industry best practices and involve consolidating or eliminating any policies that are obsolete, duplicative, or no longer necessary.

- **Clarify procedures within the department's At-Risk Dog Protocol** that pertain to space-based euthanasia determinations.
- **Adopt a policy that limits the intake of animals that are voluntarily surrendered by their owners** when a shelter facility is at a capacity where it can no longer provide adequate and humane care for the animals.
- **Create a comprehensive recruiting, hiring, and funding plan for animal care.** The goal of this plan is to ensure the department can consistently maintain an animal care staffing level that aligns with best practices. The department should submit the plan to the Mayor and City Council for consideration.
- **Develop a policy for addressing violations of Volunteer Rules and Guidelines**, and assess the feasibility of implementing a background check protocol for volunteers.

To improve the administration of the department's dog licensing program and its oversight of animal microchips, LAAS should:

- **Implement new enforcement procedures for City dog licensing requirements**, which could include mechanisms implemented by peer jurisdictions such as automatic citations or fines for individuals who fail to respond to requests to license their pet.
- **Identify veterinary service providers operating within the City who are not submitting rabies vaccination certificate information to LAAS**, as mandated by the Los Angeles Municipal code, and inform them of relevant vaccine certificate reporting requirements.
- **Consider partnering with licensed veterinary offices and other animal services providers** to allow those service providers to issue dog licenses directly to pet owners.
- **Revise the current microchip management procedures** to ensure the department has the capability to effectively monitor microchip inventory levels and usage.

LAAS animal shelters provide necessary public health, public safety, and community support services to Angelenos, and play an important role in saving animals that might otherwise have few opportunities for living a healthy, full life. By implementing the recommendations in this report, the City can take important steps to ensure that LAAS shelters can meet the needs of the communities they serve, and that shelters provide humane, responsible care to animals.

Background

The City of Los Angeles (City) Department of Animal Services, also known as LA Animal Services (LAAS), is responsible for protecting the health, safety and welfare of animals and people within the City of Los Angeles. The department operates City animal shelters, issues licenses to pet owners, issues permits for and regulates animal-related businesses and facilities, and provides support to members of the community through animal care vouchers and pet food assistance programs. The department also plays a law enforcement and emergency response role. LAAS is responsible for investigating violations of the animal safety, welfare, and nuisance laws, such as animal cruelty. This includes impounding dangerous animals that constitute a threat to public safety. LAAS also responds to requests to rescue pets and wildlife during emergencies.

Operating the City's animal shelter system is among the core functions of the department. There are six LAAS animal shelters in the City – South Los Angeles, East Valley, Harbor, North Central, West Los Angeles, and West Valley.[1] **Together, the shelters took in 48,132 animals in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025**. The South Los Angeles and East Valley shelters are the largest, and house 47% of the animals that come into the system. Once an animal is in LAAS custody, the department is responsible for providing food, medical care, and enrichment activities (e.g. dog playgroups) while working to either return the pet to their owner, or facilitate an adoption.

Figure 1: The Entrance (left) and Outdoor Kennels (right) of the East Valley Shelter



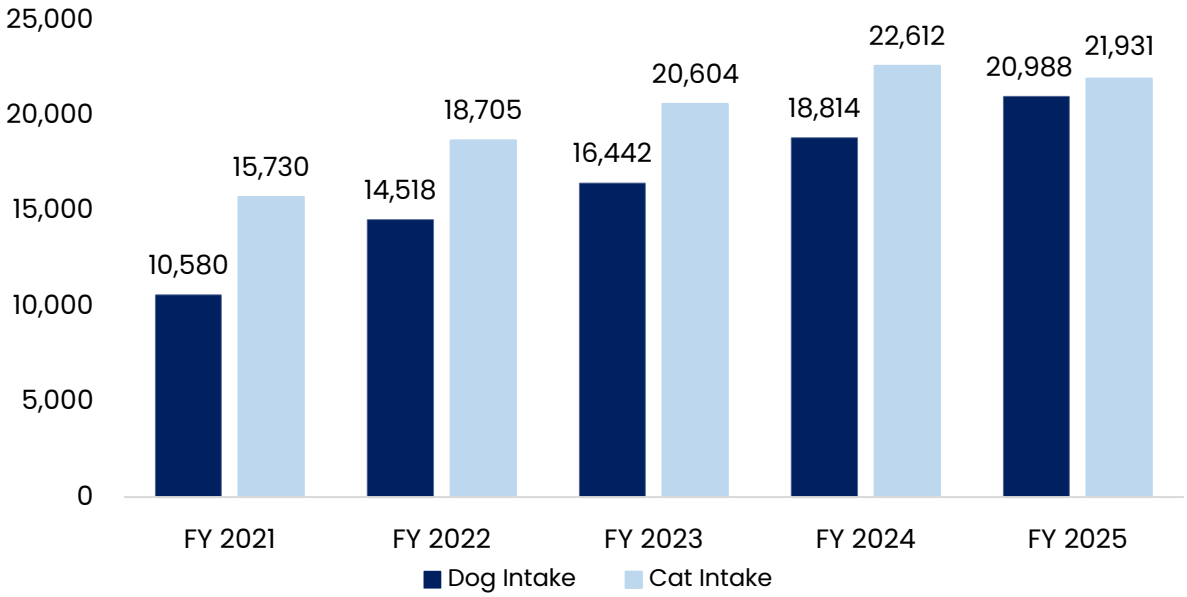
LAAS operates "no-kill" shelters, meaning the shelter's goal is to maintain a save-rate (i.e., animals have an outcome other than euthanasia or death due to other causes) of 90%. In recent years, LAAS has come under scrutiny for severe crowding and unsafe conditions at the City's shelters, particularly for the dog population. During the first year of the COVID-19

[1] LAAS has two additional shelter facilities that are currently leased by nonprofit organizations. LAAS does not manage the day-to-day operations of these facilities. The analysis and data contained in this audit report does not include operations at leased facilities.

pandemic, the City shelter population was below its total kennel capacity of 737 dogs. However, starting in May 2021, the population of animals steadily increased. The dog population peaked in September 2023 with over 1,600 dogs, more than double the system's kennel capacity.

Crowding can cause dogs to deteriorate due to the stress of confinement in small areas with other animals, and a lack of enrichment. Extended periods of fear, anxiety, and stress can result in harmful behaviors, such as excessive licking or biting, and increased aggression towards shelter staff. During this period of severe crowding, LAAS staff housed dogs in shared kennels and pop-up crates that lined the hallways of the shelters, creating an unsafe and difficult work environment for shelter employees.

Figure 2: Cat and Dog Intake FY 2021 Through FY 2025



The shelter population has since decreased from the 2023 peak, including a dip below maximum capacity after the Los Angeles fires in January 2025. However, animal populations have remained elevated for the past five years, and the department faces several operational and management challenges. The purpose of this performance audit is to evaluate LAAS' management of the City animal shelter system, focusing primarily on shelter capacity, shelter resources, and the effectiveness of certain business management functions. The audit scope period is FY 2021 through FY 2025.

Audit staff sought to answer the following questions:

- Do LAAS policies and procedures align with organizational goals and best practices?

- Does LAAS have the staffing and operational capacity necessary to meet the demand for animal sheltering?
- Is LAAS able to manage the animal population in a manner that ensures shelter animals receive adequate care?
- Do opportunities exist to increase revenue to support animal shelter operations and care programs?

The Audit Services Division will also publish a subsequent evaluation of the protocols, systems, and facilities in place to provide care to animals. This will include an evaluation of animal care practices and the department's alignment with relevant Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, 2022*. Audit Services is conducting this evaluation in conjunction with a veterinary consultant that specializes in animal shelter management.

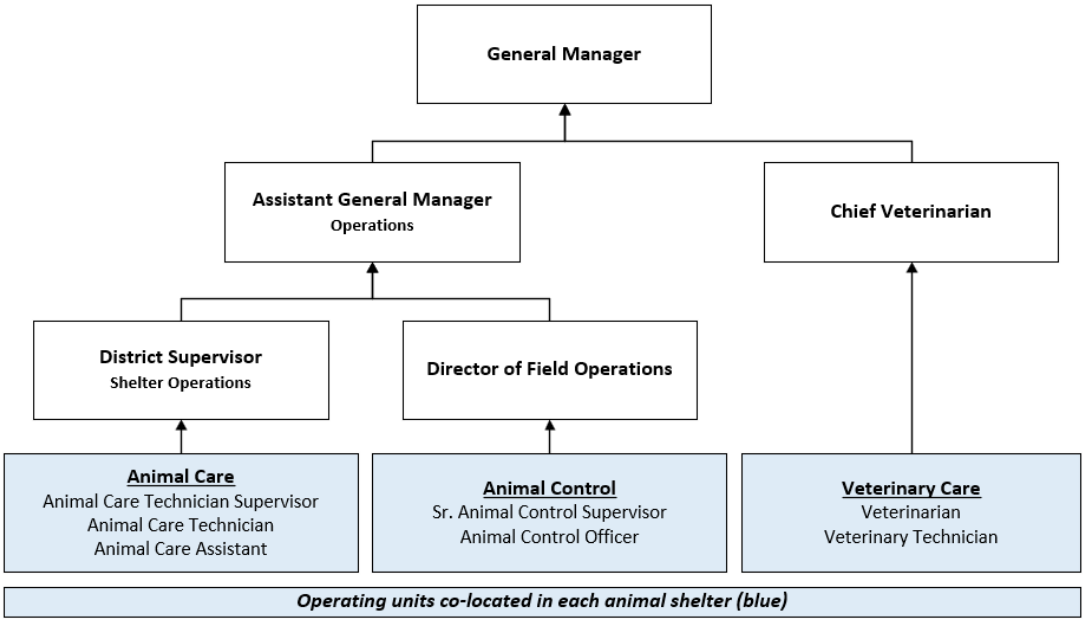
Shelter Operations

Each animal shelter has three core service areas responsible for different aspects of the sheltering and animal regulation system – animal care, veterinary care, and animal control. Each of these functions reports to a different supervisor within the shelter.

Animal Care	*Animal Care is responsible for housing and caring for impounded animals. This includes animal intake and adoption, feeding and care, and animal enrichment. Animal Care also manages the department's volunteer program, as well as the department's partnerships with organizations that provide animal enrichment services. Animal Care Technicians (ACTs) and Animal Care Technician Supervisors lead animal care services in City shelters.*
Veterinary Care	*Veterinary Care provides medical services to impounded animals, including microchipping and lifesaving procedures for sick and injured animals, and examines and processes animals in support of animal cruelty cases. Veterinarians and Veterinary Technicians lead veterinary care services in City shelters.*
Animal Control	*Animal Control operations are based out of City animal shelters, but primarily provide field services in the community. Animal Control enforces animal laws and regulations, inspects and issues permits for animal establishments, investigates animal cruelty crimes, and investigates animal nuisance allegations. Animal Control also responds to safety incidents, including dangerous animal calls threatening public safety and animal rescues. Animal Control Officers and Senior Animal Control Officers lead animal control activities. Animal Control operations are outside the scope of this audit.*

The management structure of the LAAS shelter system is somewhat decentralized. The Board of Animal Services Commissioners serves as the department's governing board. The Board supervises, controls, and regulates the department, as authorized by the City Charter. The department's chief executive is the General Manager. Animal care falls largely under the purview of the department's Assistant General Manager for operations, while animal medical services fall under the purview of the department's Chief Veterinarian. Under the Assistant General Manager there are three District Supervisors that oversee operations at the shelters.

Figure 3: The Reporting Structure for Animal Shelter Staff



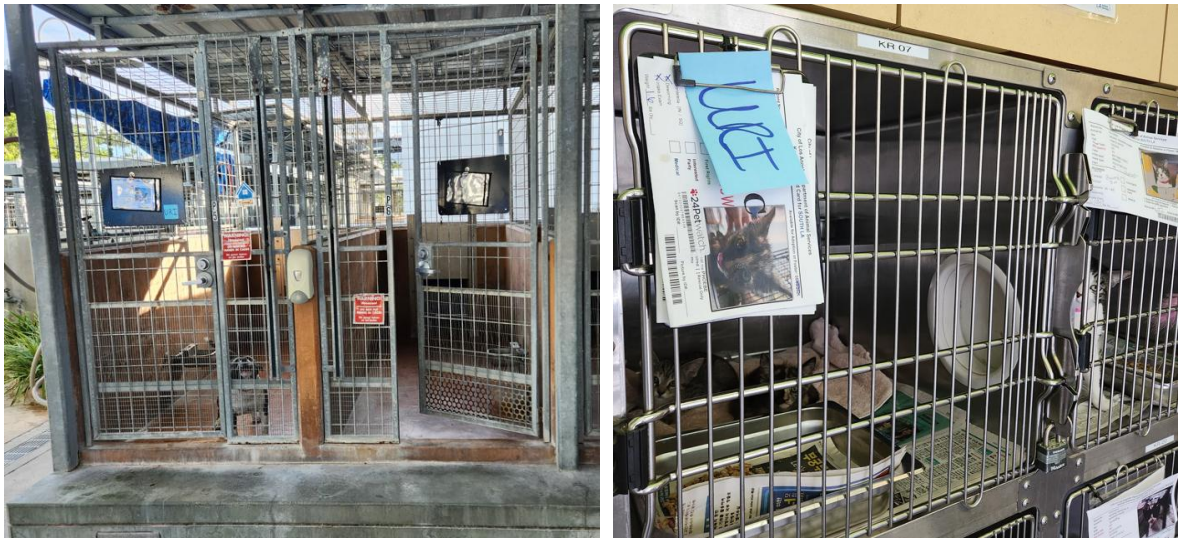
City animal shelters do not have an individual shelter manager overseeing daily operations. As a result, streamlining and coordinating operations and decisions among the three service areas, and standardizing operations across the six animal shelters, can be a challenge for the department. The City is unique in that it operates multiple shelters, while many other jurisdictions' shelter system consists of a single animal shelter.

In addition to City staff, the shelters are supported by a significant volunteer force. In 2024, approximately 1,000 people volunteered at City shelters each month, working a total of 137,928 hours over the course of the year. Volunteers provide enrichment to dogs (e.g., walking, playing, etc.), help clean kennels, film and promote animals on social media, provide adoption counseling, and work adoption events in the community. Chesterfield Square, East Valley, and North Central shelters have pet food pantry programs that rely heavily on volunteers. This program provides cat and dog food to low-income residents whose pets are spayed or neutered, and licensed.

Animal Intake and Shelter Capacity

The City animal shelter system has 737 dog kennels, and 340 cat kennels, and other housing areas for less common animals and wildlife.[2] The majority of animals that arrive at the shelters are dogs and cats, making up 85% of the animals that came into the shelters from FY 2021 through FY 2025. The remaining 15% of animals included rabbits and other small mammals, birds, and occasionally livestock and horses.

Figure 4: Dog Kennels (left) and Cat Kennels (right)



Approximately 58% of dogs and cats coming into the shelters are strays, and 24% are animals that were surrendered by their owners. Beyond strays and owner surrendered animals, the remaining animals are under LAAS care for safety and other reasons, such as animals impounded for evidence reasons, animals temporarily housed following the arrest or incapacitation of an owner, and animals temporarily housed while LAAS staff attempt to reunite an animal with an owner.

Budget

Despite having a broad set of responsibilities, LAAS' budget is small relative to the City's overall budget and the budgets of other City departments. **Between FY 2021 and FY 2025, the total budget for LAAS (i.e., the department's budget appropriation and the budget for indirect support costs such as employee benefits and facilities) ranged from $42.9 million to $61.1 million.[3] This is approximately half of a percent of the City's total departmental**

[2] This number does not include kennels designated for isolation or medical observation.

[3] From FY 2021 through FY 2025, direct budget appropriations for LAAS (i.e., excluding budgeted amounts for indirect costs) were $23.2, $25.7, $26.9, $31.7, and $30.3 million, respectively.

budget, which ranged from $7.85 to $9.27 billion.[4] Table 1 below shows the total budgeted for LAAS from FY 2021 through FY 2025, and the department's share of the total City budget.

Table 1: LAAS Total Budget Relative to the City's Total Departmental Budget

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
LAAS Total Budget *(Includes indirect costs)*	$42.9M	$48.7M	$50.8M	$58.7M	$61.1M
Total Departmental Budget *(All City departments)*	$7.85B	$8.53B	$8.61B	$9.22B	$9.27B
LAAS Share of Total	0.55%	0.57%	0.59%	0.64%	0.66%

Shelter operations is the largest LAAS program, and accounts for the largest share of the departmental budget. Over the past five fiscal years, the total budget for LAAS shelter operations budget (i.e., the budget appropriation and the budget for indirect support costs) ranged from $21.3 million in FY 2021 to $33.7 million in FY 2025.[5]

Table 2: Shelter Operations and Animal Care Budget

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Total Shelter Operations Budget *(includes indirect costs)*	$21.3M	$24.6M	$25.3	$30.7M	$33.7M
Authorized Positions	167	167	173	173	171

The City's General Fund is the department's primary funding source. Two special revenue funds, the Animal Welfare Trust Fund and the Animal Sterilization Fund, also support animal care and community animal sterilization programs. The department collects revenue from license and permit fees, most of which comes from dog licenses. A portion of the dog license fee goes into the Animal Sterilization Fund to pay for vouchers for animal spay and neuter, and the rest is deposited into the City's General Fund. The Animal Welfare Trust Fund is funded mostly by donations and can support a wide variety of uses, from programs at specific shelters to the purchase of equipment.

I. LAAS Policies Address Key Legal Requirements, But Not Shelter Management Best Practices

The decentralized management structure of the animal shelter system, and unique operating conditions of each location, highlight the importance of cohesive and complementary policies and procedures to guide citywide daily operations and decision making. LAAS has more than 160 standard operating procedures (SOPs) that address departmental operations

[4] The City's departmental budget excludes the proprietary departments (Los Angeles World Airports, Water and Power, and Harbor) and certain funds not allocated to specific departments.

[5] From FY 2021 through FY 2025, direct budget appropriations for LAAS shelter operations (i.e., excluding budgeted amounts for indirect costs) were $9.6, $10.7, $11.6, $14.3, $14.5 million, respectively.

and standards, including management and operation of the animal shelters. **We found that the department's policies and procedures comply with relevant California Food and Agriculture Code requirements for public animal shelters. However, although the policies comply with minimum legal requirements, they do not always align with recognized best practices for shelter administration and population management.**

LAAS Policies Comply with the California Food and Agriculture Code

California Food and Agriculture Code Division 14 Section 31108, Regulation and Licensing of Dogs, and California Food and Agriculture Code Division 14.5 Section 31752, Regulation of Cats, contain provisions that apply to caring for animals in public animal shelters. The code contains several requirements that apply to LAAS operations. The code states, among other requirements:

- stray dogs and cats must be held for four days before being put up for adoption, and must be held for owner redemption for the first three days;
- if a dog or cat is scheduled to be euthanized and a nonprofit adoption organization requests to adopt that animal, that the shelter should release the animal to that organization; and
- shelters should scan dogs and cats for microchips to identify their potential owner, and make reasonable efforts to contact the owner about redemption.

We evaluated LAAS' current SOPs against eight relevant Food and Agriculture Code sections and found that LAAS policies address key sections applying to City animal shelters. Table 3 below shows the relevant Food Agriculture sections, and the applicable LAAS SOP addressing the legal requirement. For a complete list of LAAS SOPs, see **Appendix A**. See the SOPs referenced in Table 3 in **Appendices B-D**.

Table 3: LAAS Compliance with the CA Food and Agriculture Code

CA Food and Agriculture Code	LAAS SOP Alignment	Relevant SOP
31108(a)(1): The required holding period for a stray dog impounded pursuant to this division shall be six business days, not including the day of impoundment, except as follows: (A) If the public or private shelter has made the dog available for owner redemption on one weekday evening until at least 7 p.m. or one weekend day, the holding period shall be four business days, not including the day of impoundment.	Yes	Ops #11: Impound procedures, hold types, and owner notification
31108(a)(2): Stray dogs shall be held for owner redemption during the first three days of the holding period, not including the day of impoundment, and shall be available for owner redemption or adoption for the remainder of the holding period.	Yes	

CA Food and Agriculture Code	LAAS SOP Alignment	Relevant SOP
31108(b)(1)*: A stray dog that is impounded pursuant to this division shall, before the euthanasia of that animal, be released to a nonprofit, animal rescue, or adoption organization if requested by the organization before the scheduled euthanasia of that animal. The shelter may enter into cooperative agreements with an animal rescue or adoption organization. In addition, to a required spay or neuter deposit, the public or private shelter, at its discretion may assess a fee, not to exceed the standard adoption fee, for animals adopted or released.	Yes	Ops #28: New Hope rescue partner alert program - revised
31108(c)*: During the holding period and before the adoption or euthanasia of a dog, a public shelter shall scan the dog for a microchip that identifies the owner of that dog and shall make reasonable efforts to contact the owner and notify the owner that the owner's dog is impounded and is available for redemption.	Yes	Ops #12: Microchip scanning policy and procedures
31752(a): (a) The required holding period for a stray cat impounded pursuant to this division shall be six business days, not including the day of impoundment, except as follows: (1) If the public or private shelter has made the cat available for owner redemption on one weekday evening until at least 7 p.m. or one weekend day, the holding period shall be four business days, not including the day of impoundment.	Yes	Ops #11: Impound procedures, hold types, and owner notification
31752(b)(1)*: Stray cats shall be held for owner redemption during the first three days of the holding period, not including the day of impoundment, and shall be available for owner redemption or adoption for the remainder of the holding period.	Yes	
31752(c)(1)*: A stray cat that is impounded pursuant to this division shall, before the euthanasia of that animal, be released to a nonprofit, animal rescue, or adoption organization if requested by the organization before the scheduled euthanasia of that animal. The public or private shelter may enter into cooperative agreements with an animal rescue or adoption organization. In addition, to a required spay or neuter deposit, the public or private shelter, at its discretion may assess a fee, not to exceed the standard adoption fee, for animals adopted or released.	Yes	Ops #28: New Hope rescue partner alert program - revised
31752(d) During the holding period and before the adoption or euthanasia of a cat, a public shelter shall scan the cat for a microchip that identifies the owner of that cat and shall make reasonable efforts to contact the owner and notify the owner that the owner's cat is impounded and is available for redemption.	Yes	Ops #12: Microchip scanning policy and procedures

**Section 17006 of the Food and Agriculture Code provides an exemption to these sections, stating that animals that are irremediably suffering from a serious illness or severe injury shall not be held for owner redemption or adoption.*

Shelter Administration and Population Management Best Practices

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, 2022* is a widely recognized standard for the care and welfare of animals in shelters. The guidelines provide evidence-based guidance to those caring for animals in shelters, rescues, fosters, sanctuaries, and other animal care settings. ASV recommends the guidelines be used as a benchmark for organizational self-assessment and improvement and serve as a framework for shelter evaluation. Adherence to the guidelines can help organizations reduce crowding, stress, and disease, and improve safety.

The *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, 2022* contain several areas of focus related to animal shelter operations. For this audit, we evaluated whether LAAS' SOPs align with 10 relevant guidelines within the "Management and Record Keeping" section and the "Population Management" section that fell within the scope of the audit.[6] The guidelines generally state that:

- Organizations must maintain up-to-date protocols and actively support staff mental health through fair pay, positive culture, and accessible support systems.
- Operating beyond "capacity for care" is unacceptable; shelters must only admit animals they can properly support.
- Admission decisions must prioritize the animal's best interests and be balanced against the shelter's ability to minimize length of stay.
- Shelters must track detailed intake/outcome data and analyze "length of stay" to identify operational bottlenecks, rather than relying on "save rates" alone.

LAAS had SOPs addressing only two of the 10 best practices recommended in the *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, 2022.* Table 4 below shows the relevant ASV guidelines, and the applicable LAAS SOP addressing the best practice. See the SOP referenced in Table 4 in **Appendix E**.

Table 4: LAAS Alignment with ASV Guidelines

ASV Guidelines	LAAS SOP Alignment	Relevant SOP
1.3: All personnel must have access to up-to-date protocols	No	N/A
2.3: Decisions about intake must consider whether admission is the best option for the animal or their situation	No	N/A

[6] The Controller's Office will release a subsequent report detailing the results of an evaluation of the protocols, systems, and facilities in place to provide care to animals. The evaluation will assess LAAS animal care practices and the department's alignment with the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, 2022*.

ASV Guidelines	LAAS SOP Alignment	Relevant SOP
2.3: Admission must be balanced with the ability to provide appropriate outcomes, minimize length of stay, and ensure the shelter remains within its capacity for care	No	N/A
2.3: An animal must only be admitted if the shelter can provide the care they require	No	N/A
2.4: At a minimum, shelter tracks monthly intake and outcome type for each species by age group	No	N/A
2.4: Live release rates or save rates must be evaluated in the context of animal welfare and cannot be used alone as a measure of success	No	N/A
2.1: Operating beyond an organization's capacity for care is an unacceptable practice.	Yes	OPS 01: Adoptable Animals
2.1: Policies and protocols must be in place to ensure an organization operates within its capacity for care	Yes	OPS 01: Adoptable Animals
2.3: Organizations that are impacted by unpredicted intakes must have a plan to flex their operations to increase their capacity for care	No	N/A
2.4: Length of stay data, broken down by age category, species, status and location, is regularly analyzed to identify bottlenecks, mismatched resources, and capacity for care concerns	No	N/A

It is important to note that the actual operating practices of the department may partially or fully align with recommended best practices. For example, LAAS has a data collection and reporting program which tracks animal intake, animal history, and animal outcomes. However, the department does not have a specific SOP that provides instruction on data input.

We also noted that the department does not have a formal SOP for sanitation. ASV guidelines require specific protocols for removing organic matter and effectively cleaning kennels. Sanitation is a significant part of the work of Animal Care Technicians. We will report on LAAS shelter cleaning and sanitation procedures in our separate animal care evaluation report.

LAAS Standard Operating Procedures Are Outdated

ASV *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, 2022*, emphasize the importance of providing up-to-date, clear guidance to animal shelter staff. Up-to-date and clear guidelines help shelter systems to ensure consistent operations and standards, and help employees ensure compliance with applicable laws and professional guidelines in areas such as employee and volunteer health and safety, and animal care.

LAAS has 162 SOPs covering shelter operations, medical services, personnel, enforcement operations, finance, and administrative services. However, there is no codified or regular

process in place for the review and updating of LAAS SOPs, and most of the department's SOPs have not been updated since approximately 2010. In 2023, LAAS began the process of reviewing and updating its policies through a review committee that included staff and commission members. The review process also included the City Attorney's Office. LAAS completed revised draft policies and procedures in the areas of behavior and bite disclosures. Other draft policies, including those for cleaning and sanitation, are pending approval by the City Attorney's Office. According to department managers, the initiative to update SOPs has largely stalled, and there is no clear timeline for reviewing and updating SOPs. The department has noted that completing a comprehensive review of the SOPs is a significant administrative burden.

Establishment and Implementation of the At-Risk Dog Protocol

Although the department has been unable to complete a comprehensive update of its SOPs, the department developed and implemented a new At-Risk Dog Protocol, which establishes procedures for designating dogs as at-risk of euthanasia. See the protocol in **Appendix F**. LAAS implemented the protocol as a six-month pilot program in March 2025, largely in response to crowding at the shelters and requests from the public for the department to be more transparent about when a dog is at risk of euthanasia, and how euthanasia decisions are made. This SOP provides factors for designating a dog as eligible for euthanasia, the length of time a dog will be held once designated as at-risk, and availability for rescue or adoption. One key goal for the protocol was improving euthanasia decision making consistency across shelters. This report describes the At-Risk Dog Protocol in further detail in a subsequent section.

Recommendations

To improve management of animal shelters, LAAS should:

1. Conduct a review of existing SOPs and (1) establish or update SOPs to reflect current LAAS operations and ensure alignment with industry best practices, and (2) consolidate or eliminate obsolete, duplicative, or unnecessary policies.
2. Establish a formal procedure and schedule for the regular evaluation and updating of SOPs.
3. Develop and conduct regular training for LAAS staff and volunteers to ensure shelter personnel and volunteers are aware of adopted SOPs.

II. Consistent Crowding Creates Health and Safety and Animal Welfare Risks

Over the past several years, LAAS has reported to the Mayor and City Council that its funding and staffing levels are insufficient to effectively operate its shelter facilities. A 2024

emergency funding request by the department highlighted issues with crowding and dangerous working conditions at the shelters. The request stated that LAAS has followed a "long-standing city policy that it will do everything it can to avoid making the heartbreaking decision to euthanize animals for lack of space" but that "inadequate staffing, volunteer challenges, inadequate marketing and communications, infrastructure issues and other problems have led to an unhealthy and even dangerous situation for our shelter animals, the people who care for them, and the public who visit them."

The emergency funding request came during a period of sustained crowding at City shelters which peaked in September 2023 when the daily dog population was more than twice the shelters' capacity. Although the shelter animal population has decreased since 2023, it has remained over capacity for the past several years.

We found that LAAS staffing is insufficient based on the number of kennels in the shelter system, and the number of animals typically housed by the shelter system. LAAS is limited in its ability to address crowding at shelters in part because the department accepts animals that are surrendered by their owners, regardless of capacity concerns, and typically will only euthanize animals as a last resort. Operating beyond capacity is inconsistent with shelter management best practices, threatens animal welfare, and can create a dangerous and difficult work environment.

City Animal Shelters Have Been Operating Well Beyond Kennel Capacity

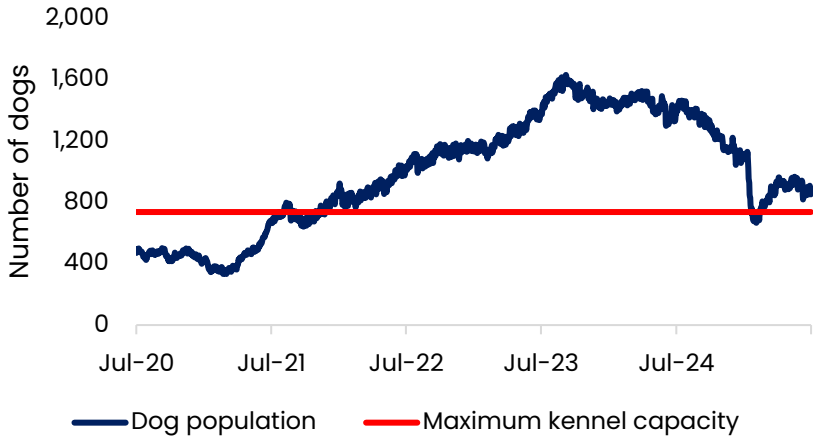
The systemwide kennel capacity for LAAS shelters is 737 dogs and 340 cats. City animal shelters have consistently operated beyond the kennel capacity for dogs and cats in recent years. **From FY 2021 through FY 2025, the daily average dog population was 998, or 35% over capacity. The average cat population was 786, or 131% over capacity.**

During the most extreme periods of crowding in 2023 and 2024, the dog population reached more than double kennel capacity, and the cat population was more than four times kennel capacity. Operating beyond capacity can negatively impact the welfare and behaviors of animals, making the handling of animals more dangerous for staff and volunteers. During periods of extreme crowding, staff housed animals in shared kennels and pop-up crates, practices that do not align with shelter best practices. LAAS described the work environment as extremely difficult due to noise, space constraints, and an inability to provide the desired level of care to animals. Department management also said shelter crowding has a significant negative impact on morale.

Dog crowding, and the related safety impacts, has been a major concern for both LAAS staff and the public. In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the dog population at City shelters was below the kennel capacity of 737 (Figure 5). However, starting in about May 2021, the

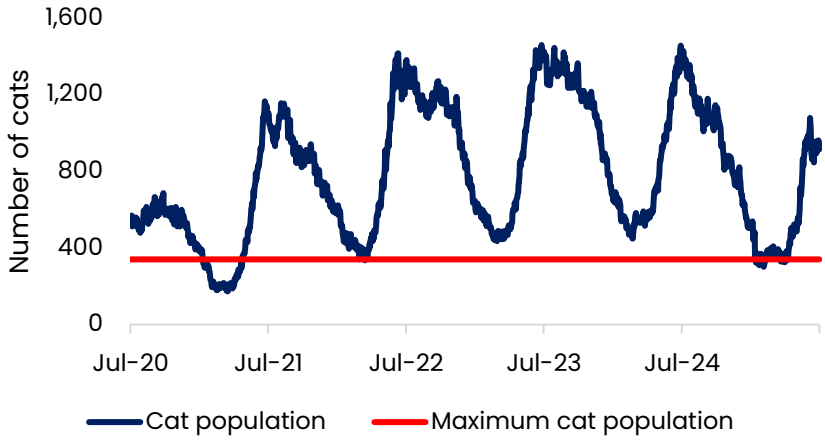
population of dogs steadily increased, going from about 500 dogs to 1,550 by August 2023, double the system's kennel capacity. From 2022 to 2024, the shelters had a daily population of over 1,000 dogs. The population stayed significantly above capacity until January 2025, when an increase in adoptions following the Los Angeles wildfires resulted in the dog population decreasing below capacity for the first time since 2021. However, the dip below capacity was temporary. Dog populations trended upwards for much of 2025, and remain above the system's kennel capacity.

Figure 5: Dog Population Relative to Kennel Capacity



The shelter system's cat population is also consistently above kennel capacity of 340. The cat population varies seasonally because cats give birth in spring and summer months, leading to surges in cat populations during those periods. During the winter and early spring months the cat population typically exceeds kennel capacity by an average of 41%. However, during peak birth periods in late spring and summer months the cat population increases to about 1,100, more than three times the system's kennel capacity.

Figure 6: Cat Population Relative to Kennel Capacity



Crowding at the shelters creates health and safety risks. Living in shelters for an extended period of time, in small enclosures with loud noises and minimal enrichment, negatively impacts animals' physical and mental well-being, and sometimes leads to animals acting aggressively. In 2024, LAAS reported that staff and volunteer injuries had tripled since 2019, with 134 injuries in 2023 alone. Additionally, in 2024 The State of California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (CAL/OSHA) cited the Harbor shelter for "failing to evaluate and correct overcrowding at their animal shelter, which resulted in animal attacks and bites on employees." The citation carried a fine of $563,250.

It is important for City departments to ensure facilities and practices protect employees and members of the public. Liability payouts have been an issue for the department. Between FY 2021 and FY 2025, the City paid $15.8 million in liability payments for cases related to dangerous conditions or professional negligence.[7]

Shelter Crowding Is Inconsistent with Best Practices

LAAS has few options for managing its shelter population, which results in consistent crowding. While state law generally requires the department to impound and house all strays and dangerous animals, it does not require shelters to accept animals voluntarily surrendered by owners. LAAS currently accepts all owner surrendered animals, regardless of whether space is available in the shelter. According to LAAS, not accepting owner surrendered animals could result in an increase in people abandoning their animals, creating unsafe conditions for the animal and the public.

About a quarter of all cats and dogs that come into LAAS shelters are brought in by owners voluntarily surrendering their animals. There can be a variety of reasons owners surrender an animal. Common causes include owners moving into a home that does not allow pets, not being able to afford pet food or medical costs, not having enough time to care for the pet, having too many pets, being allergic to pets, and struggling with a pet's behavioral issues. LAAS provides some resources, such as the pet food pantry, to help owners keep their pets, but many still choose to surrender their animals.

[7] These liability payments include some cases that were unrelated to dog bites or other injuries caused by animals.

Table 5: Cat and Dog Intake FY 2025

Intake type	Cat	Dog	Total	Percent
Stray	14,195	10,428	24,623	57%
Owner surrender	4,058	5,642	9,700	23%
Possible owner	601	3,259	3,860	9%
Foster	1,581	837	2,418	6%
Other	1,496	822	2,318	5%
Total	21,931	20,988	42,919	---

The department should consider developing procedures for limiting the intake of owner surrendered animals once an adequate level of care cannot be provided. Such a procedure could still allow for select exemptions, such as intake of animals that are sick, in danger, or dangerous, and intake when LAAS staff deem that surrendering an animal to the shelter is the only option available to the owner. However, the acceptance of all animals, regardless of shelter population levels, can worsen crowding and is a practice that does not align with *ASV Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, 2022*. The guidelines recommend that shelters accept animals only when they have the ability to provide an adequate level of care. Specifically, Guideline 2.3.1 recommends that:

- Decisions about intake consider whether admission is the best option for the animal or their situation;
- Admission is balanced with the ability to provide appropriate outcomes, minimize length of stay, and ensure the shelter remains within its capacity for care; and
- An animal is admitted only if the shelter can provide the care they require.

We also spoke to seven public animal shelter systems in California, including the City of San Jose, the City of Fresno, the City of Long Beach, the City and County of San Francisco, Los Angeles County, San Diego County, and Ventura County, to review the shelter population management policies and strategies of peer agencies. **The cities of Long Beach, San Jose, Fresno, and San Diego County, either do not accept owner surrendered animals or limit intake of surrendered animals. Some of those jurisdictions have certain exemptions if an animal creates a safety concern.**

Limiting intake under certain circumstances would be a significant change for LAAS, but it could reduce crowding and improve the department's ability to humanely care for animals. Limiting intake may even result in fewer euthanasia procedures because the shelter would be less crowded, and animals would be less likely to deteriorate. However, the City would need to monitor the impact of such a policy change on the rates at which pet owners abandon animals, which could negatively impact both the abandoned and public safety.

LAAS Should Balance Save Rate Goals with Animal and Staff Welfare

In 2003, the City began working towards the goal of becoming a "no-kill" shelter system when the Mayor at the time publicly set a goal of making Los Angeles a "no-kill" city by 2008. In 2017, the City Council approved a resolution to confirm the City's commitment to the movement. The term "no-kill" generally refers to a save rate (i.e., the rate at which animals have an outcome other than death due to euthanasia or other causes) of 90%.[8]

The LAAS save rate was 58% in 2012, and increased to 91% in 2020. The drastic decrease in animal euthanasia has been a meaningful accomplishment for LAAS. However, it is important to note that under the City's save rate calculation, the animals housed in the shelter are counted toward the 90% "save" goal. This means that even if animals are housed in crowded shelters for long periods of time or are suffering, the calculation would consider this outcome a success, despite it being a cause for concern.

LAAS has met its "no-kill" goal for dogs in each of the past five fiscal years. The save rate for cats has ranged from 79% to 87%. According to LAAS, it is extremely difficult for the department to accomplish the 90% save rate for cats because kittens require bottle feeding for around four to six weeks, and LAAS does not have the capacity to bottle feed kittens in shelters. **Unless a kitten is placed with a rescue or in foster care within the first day of being impounded, LAAS is typically forced to euthanize the animal.**

Table 6: Save Rates for Dogs and Cats FY 2021-FY 2025

Fiscal Year	Cat	Dog
FY 2021	87%	94%
FY 2022	85%	94%
FY 2023	81%	93%
FY 2024	79%	92%
FY 2025	81%	90%

However, an overemphasis on save rates has in part caused shelter populations to increase, and the level of care to decrease. LAAS staff explained that when shelters are crowded, it is much harder to facilitate adoptions because shelters become less conducive to connecting potential adopters with suitable animals, and animals may appear less suitable to potential adopters due to the animal experiencing stress, or the animals and kennels not being as well-maintained as staff would like.

[8] The save rate is calculated as: (live intakes – non-live outcomes)/live intakes. For this report, non-live outcomes include euthanasia, death, body disposal, missing, escaped, and stolen. Dogs with an intake type of "foster" are excluded from the calculation, in line with the practice of LAAS' reporting.

LAAS data shows that the time it takes to facilitate dog adoptions increased significantly during periods of kennel crowding. For dogs, the average length of stay from intake to adoption increased significantly during the years of the most crowding, though it was mostly unchanged for cats. In FY 2021 the average time between intake and adoption for dogs was 24 days. That number increased to a high of 35 days in FY 2023.

It also took longer for the department to euthanize animals for cases where staff determined that euthanasia was the best course of action, which would include euthanasia for safety or medical reasons. According to LAAS staff, pressure by members of the public opposed to euthanasia caused employees to become reluctant to euthanize animals. Increases in the time it takes to euthanize an animal can result in animals that are already suffering to remain in kennels longer than desired, and in potentially dangerous dogs remaining in shelters where they pose risks to other animals, staff, visitors, and volunteers. In FY 2021, the average time between intake and euthanasia was 10 days. By FY 2024, the average number increased to 33 days.

Table 7: Average Number of Days from Intake to Adoption and Euthanasia for Dogs

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Adoption	24	29	35	30	15
Euthanasia	10	25	29	33	9

LAAS has generally only euthanized animals for safety reasons, though it can euthanize for space reasons as a last resort. However, difficult working conditions for staff and volunteers, inadequate living conditions for animals, and insufficient care for animals during periods of extreme crowding is not sustainable for the department, and can lead to animal suffering. In order to keep shelters within their capacity for care given the number of kennels and staffing restraints, City shelters may occasionally need to drop below the 90% save rate goal.

Most of the government animal shelters we interviewed (City of San Jose, the City of Fresno, the City of Long Beach, the City and County of San Francisco, Los Angeles County, and Ventura County) do not consider themselves "no-kill" shelters. Some shelters have found that the designation does not always support the overall wellness of the animals. Despite not operating "no-kill" shelters, these jurisdictions reported typical save or live release rates at around 90%.

The ASV guidelines also make clear that shelters should consider more than the animal save rate when evaluating the performance of a shelter and shelter outcomes. ASV guidelines specifically state that:

- Operating beyond an organization's capacity for care is an unacceptable practice (2.1); and

- Release rates or save rates are [to be] evaluated in the context of animal welfare and are not used alone as a measure of success (2.4).

LAAS Implemented A New Euthanasia Protocol in March 2025

The department's Euthanasia Guidelines SOP, which provides instructions for administering euthanasia, has not been updated since 2010. The policy states that "while the department's ultimate goal is to end the euthanasia of adoptable animals, there will always be some cases where euthanasia is warranted," including "for population control to alleviate shelter overcrowding." However, until recently, the department did not have codified policies making euthanasia determinations.

In March 2025, the department piloted a new At-Risk Dog Protocol. LAAS designed the protocol to provide formal guidance to staff for euthanasia decisions and to promote consistency across shelters. The protocol provides guidelines for determining when a dog will be designated as at risk for euthanasia and the reasons for doing so (e.g., an owner surrendered a dog due to a bite, a dog bites a person while housed in the shelter, the dog bites another dog while housed in the shelter, or the dog is exhibiting signs of deterioration or severe stress), the length of time the dog will be held following an at-risk determination, and whether the dog will be available for rescue, adoption, or foster.

LAAS sought to achieve several goals with the At-Risk Dog Protocol. Specifically, the department sought to:

- Reduce the number of moderate and severe bites that occur in the shelters to at least half of the number that occurred in 2024;
- Reduce the number of dogs that spend more than 30 days in shelter kennels;
- Ensure adoptable dogs at risk of euthanasia due to lack of space have the best chance to a live outcome through reunification, adoption, foster placement or transfer to a rescue group or partner shelter;
- Reduce the number of dogs with known histories of causing harm to people or serious harm/death to other dogs that are housed indefinitely in the shelter kennels;
- Increase transparency around euthanasia timelines; and
- Balance population with humane and safe capacity.

The new protocol has a specific section for designating a dog as at-risk because the "dog population [is] above capacity for care." This allows the department to place a dog on the euthanasia list for overpopulation reasons if (1) the dog population has exceeded the department's overall kennel capacity and there are no existing dogs that are designated as

at-risk for safety or other reasons, and (2) the overpopulation is impacting the department's ability to adequately care for the animals in its facilities.

However, the protocol does not:

- outline specific factors shelter supervisors should consider when determining whether euthanasia is necessary because the shelter is unable to provide adequate care; and
- does not provide guidance on selecting dogs that should be designated at-risk if no dogs are at risk for safety or other reasons (e.g., length of stay, age, etc.).

According to LAAS managers, determining whether dogs should be euthanized for space reasons is largely at the discretion of the district supervisor and the conditions at the local shelter, which increases the risk that space-related euthanasia determinations will be inconsistent.

The department completed the pilot phase for the At-Risk Dog Protocol and transitioned the protocol to a standard department procedure in October 2025. LAAS found that staff improved their proficiency in accurately assessing behavioral concerns for dogs and making at-risk determinations consistent with protocol guidelines. During the first four months of the pilot, the department even saw a slight increase in the save rate for dogs compared to the same point in 2024.

LAAS Has Partnered with a Nonprofit to Provide Enrichment to Dogs

Despite crowding issues, the department has taken steps to improve the welfare of dogs. In 2024, LAAS entered into a contract with Dogs Playing for Life, a nonprofit organization with the stated mission of improving the well-being and lives of dogs living in shelters. The nonprofit organization facilitates dog play groups at LAAS shelters in a designated play area within the shelter facility. The service allows dogs to socialize and interact with one another, exercise, and spend time outside of their confined kennel space.

Figure 7: A Play Group Facilitated by Dogs Playing for Life



The LAAS initiative with Dogs Playing for Life started in July 2024 in three shelters, and expanded to all shelters in the fall of 2025. The program is funded through the General Fund and grants, and continuation will be subject to funding availability. According to LAAS staff, the program has provided enormous benefits to the dog population and improved dog welfare by facilitating enrichment activities that would otherwise be infeasible with existing LAAS personnel and volunteers.

Shelter Staffing Is Insufficient Based on Kennel Capacity and Population Levels

Operating an animal shelter is labor intensive and can be emotionally challenging work. City shelters are open to the public from 8:00am to 5:00pm, Tuesday through Friday and 11:00am to 5:00pm Saturday and Sunday, and are staffed 24 hours a day. The department's Animal Care Technicians (ACTs) and Animal Care Technician Supervisors (ACT Supervisors) are primarily responsible for day-to-day oversight of shelter operations and animal care. ACTs provide animal care services, such as feeding and kennel cleaning, but also carry out other administrative activities, such as overseeing volunteers, and coordinating with partner organizations.[9]

ACTs and ACT Supervisors work one of three shifts – day (8:00am to 4:00pm), swing (4:00pm to 12:00am), and grave (12:00am to 8:00am), with the bulk of the staffing and animal care operations occurring during the day shift when the shelter is open to the public. To assess whether LAAS shelters are staffed at a reasonable level, we used the National Animal Care and Control Association's (NACA) Formula for Determining Kennel Staffing Needs to estimate the appropriate staffing level for LAAS shelters.[10] The formula, which is intended as a guideline, is based on an animal care professional dedicating 15 minutes to each animal per day – nine minutes for cleaning and six minutes for feeding. The formula does not include time needed for enrichment and exercise, essential aspects of animal well-being. ASV guidelines emphasize that shelters should give enrichment the same significance as nutrition and medical care, and recommend daily enrichment and physical activity that meets each animal's needs.

As of September 2025, LAAS had 65 ACTs and 10 ACT Supervisors (75 animal care employees total) designated for animal care during the day shift.[11] **However, based on the NACA Formula for Determining Kennel Staffing Needs, LAAS should have around 90 employees responsible for animal care, assuming there is one animal in each of the system's 1,077 kennels (737 dog kennels and 340 cat kennels). LAAS would have needed around 185 animal care employees during the peak period of crowding in FY 2024, when the shelter system had a daily average of 2,162 cats and dogs housed in City shelters.** According to LAAS managers and staff, understaffing is a barrier to providing adequate animal care.

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[9] Although shelter volunteers contribute to animal care, they are not City employees. The shelter staffing analysis contained in this report does not include support provided by volunteers.

[10] NACA was established in 1978 to provide resources, standardized training, and support for animal care and control professionals across the United States.

[11] This number does not account for staff on leave during the day shift, meaning the actual number of ACTs and ACT Supervisors working on any given day may be lower than 75.

Table 8 below shows the recommended number of animal care employees for LAAS shelters, based on NACA's shelter staffing formula. The table provides recommended staffing levels for the shelter system as a whole as well as individual shelters. See the NACA formula for determining animal care staffing needs in **Appendix G**.

Table 8: Recommended Animal Care Staffing Based on NACA Best Practice

Shelter	Animal Care Staffing Level as of Sept. 2025 (Day Shift)	NACA Recommended Staffing – Kennel Capacity (1,077 dog and cat kennels)	NACA Recommended Staffing – Peak Crowding (2,162 dogs and cats)
East Valley	16	13	40
Harbor	13	8	24
North Central	10	17	33
South LA	18	27	41
West LA	9	9	21
West Valley	9	16	26
Total	75	90	185

When considering only kennel capacity, LAAS staffing falls short of NACA recommended staffing levels at three shelters, with the South Los Angeles Shelter being severely understaffed. LAAS staffing was insufficient at all shelters based on the numbers of animals housed in the shelter system during peak periods. The City should take steps to address staffing constraints to improve the quality of care it can provide to animals.

Recommendations

To ensure the department can effectively manage animal populations and deliver adequate care to animals, LAAS should:

4. Establish a policy limiting the intake of animals voluntarily surrendered when a shelter can no longer provide adequate, humane care to animals.
5. Clarify procedures in the At-Risk Dog Protocol related to space-based euthanasia determinations.
6. Develop a recruiting, hiring, and funding plan allowing the department to maintain an animal care staffing level consistent with best practice recommended by the National Animal Care and Control Association's or a similar recognized organization within the animal shelter or animal care field. The department should submit the plan to the Mayor and City Council for consideration.

III. Enforcement of Pet Licensing Requirements Is Weak and Results in Lost Revenue for the City

State of California law and the Los Angeles Municipal Code require every dog owner to obtain a license for their dog.[12] LAAS is the City department responsible for administering the City's dog licensing program. The licensing of dogs helps the City regulate the dog population, reunite dogs with owners if they are lost, and verify that dogs have obtained rabies vaccinations.[13] A dog license can only be obtained if the dog has an active rabies vaccination, and licenses are not active beyond a dog's rabies vaccination renewal date. Owners can register their dog or renew their license in person at an LAAS shelter or online.

The City issues either a one-year or a three-year license, and licensing costs depend on whether the dog is altered (spayed or neutered) or unaltered. The most commonly issued dog license type is a one-year license for altered dogs, which costs owners $20. The amount charged for a one-year altered dog license consists of two components – a dog license fee of $16.50, and an annual dog license tax of $3.50. The three-year altered dog license costs owners $55. The three-year altered license consists of a dog license fee of $44.50 and a three-year dog license tax of $10.50. A portion of dog license ($7 for a one-year license and $21 for a three-year license) revenue goes to the Animal Sterilization Fund, a special fund.

Table 9: Dog License Fee and Tax Structure

Dog License Type (Altered)	Dog License Fee	Dog License Tax	Total
1-Year	$16.50	$3.50	$20
3-Year	$44.50	$10.50	$55

We found that LAAS' process for monitoring owner compliance with dog licensing requirements is inefficient, and that the department has ineffective systems in place to enforce the City's dog licensing requirements. As a result, the dog licensing rate in the City is low, which results in less revenue for the City, and an inability to confirm that pet owners are vaccinating dogs to protect against rabies, which is an important public health measure. LAAS should take steps to increase the number of dog owners that obtain licenses for their pet, and consider opportunities to partner with licensed veterinary offices and other animal services providers in order to increase the number of licenses it issues.

[12] CA Health and Safety Code 121690 and Los Angeles Municipal Code 53.15.

[13] Rabies is a viral zoonotic disease impacting an animal's brain. Rabies can cause animals to become aggressive and excitable. Dogs can transmit rabies to other animals and humans.

Weak Enforcement of Licensing Requirements

LAAS procedures for enforcing City requirements that mandate owners obtain dog licenses, and renew those licenses, are insufficient. For pet owners that have already obtained a license for their dog, LAAS will send the owner a renewal reminder letter 30 days before the license expiration date. If the owner does not renew the license, LAAS sends a license expiration notification 45 days after the expiration date. The expiration notice includes a $5 late fee added to the cost of the license renewal. However, if the owner does not renew the license after receiving these two notices, LAAS stops sending notices to the dog owner, and the department takes no additional steps to obtain compliance.

LAAS has the ability to issue Administrative Citation Enforcement Program (ACE) citations through the City Attorney's Office when owners fail to license their dog.[14] According to the department, the issuance of ACE citations for licensing can be issued in connection with enforcement activities or investigations undertaken by the department's Animal Control Officers.

LAAS managers explained that the department previously had a license canvassing program that contributed to the issuance of ACE citations. With this program, LAAS canvassers would go door-to-door to inform residents of dog licensing requirements. If canvassers observed a dog that did not have a license, it could result in an ACE citation. However, due to staffing constraints and high turnover, and concerns about the efficiency of the program, LAAS eventually ended the program in 2024.[15]

Between FY 2021 and FY 2025, the number of dog licenses issued by the department steadily decreased. The number of one-year licenses issued by the department decreased 40%, from 60,692 licenses to 36,145 licenses. The number of three-year licenses dropped 18%, from 3,423 to 2,822. Table 10 below shows the number of one-year and three-year dog licenses issued during the past five fiscal years.

[14] The ACE Program falls under the City Attorney's Criminal Branch. It is a non-criminal approach to certain offenses that uses fines rather than arrests, incarceration, and criminal records, for people who violate the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

[15] The ACE Citation fine structure is (1) $100 for the 1st infraction, (2) $250 for the 2nd infraction, (3) $500 for the 3rd infraction, and (4) $1,000 for the 4th infraction.

Table 10: Dog Licenses Issued FY 2021 – FY 2025 (New Registrations and Renewals)[16]

Fiscal Year	1-Year Dog Licenses Issued	1-Year Dog License Revenue	3-Year Dog Licenses Issued	3-Year Dog License Revenue	Total Dog License Revenue
FY 2021	60,692	$1,213,840	3,427	$188,485	$1,402,325
FY 2022	50,999	$1,019,980	2,498	$137,390	$1,157,370
FY 2023	45,207	$904,140	2,729	$150,040	$1,054,180
FY 2024	41,774	$835,480	3,099	$170,445	$1,005,925
FY 2025	36,145	$722,900	2,822	$155,210	$878,110
Total	234,817	$4,696,340	14,574	$801,570	$5,497,910

Weak enforcement of dog license renewal also has an impact on the City's revenue. Between FY 2021 and FY 2025, LAAS sent out 71,128 license renewal notifications for one-year licenses which owners failed to respond to, and 8,790 notifications for three-year licenses which owners failed to respond to. Owners failing to renew their dog license resulted in approximately $1.9 million in lost revenue for the City during the past fiscal years. Table 11 below shows the number of license renewal requests between FY 2021 and FY 2025 that owners did not respond to, and the resulting lost revenue. **It is important to note that pet owners would not need to renew a license if they moved outside of the City of Los Angeles, or if the animal died.**

Table 11: Expired Dog Licenses FY 2021 – FY 2025[17]

Fiscal Year	Expired 1-Year Dog Licenses	1-Year Dog License Lost Revenue	Expired 3-Year Dog Licenses	3-Year Dog License Lost Revenue	Total Lost Revenue
FY 2021	19,893	$397,860	2,236	$122,980	$520,840
FY 2022	14,843	$296,860	1,673	$92,015	$388,875
FY 2023	14,357	$287,140	1,634	$89,870	$377,010
FY 2024	10,074	$201,480	1,624	$89,320	$290,800
FY 2025	11,961	$239,220	1,623	$89,265	$328,485
Total	71,128	$1,422,560	8,790	$483,450	$1,906,010

Few Animal Medical Care Facilities Send Vaccine Records to LAAS

The Los Angeles Municipal Code requires veterinarians doing business in the City to submit dog vaccination certificate records to LAAS.[18] Upon receiving a vaccination record, LAAS can then send a notification to the animal owner advising them of the City's dog license requirements. Despite the requirement, very few veterinary offices are submitting required

[16] Dog license revenue reported in this table is an estimate based on the number of dog licenses issued, and the applicable $20 or $55 fee paid by the owner for the 1-year and 3-year license, respectively.
[17] Lost dog license revenue reported in this table is estimated based on the number of expired dog licenses, and the applicable $20 or $55 fee which would have been paid by the owner for the 1-year and 3-year license, respectively.
[18] Los Angeles Municipal Code 53.53.

information to LAAS. Additionally, the department does not have a process in place to systematically identify and review veterinary offices for vaccine certificate reporting compliance. This means LAAS is not notified about dogs that should be licensed, and is then unable to follow up with owners.

Based on information provided by LAAS, there are 66 veterinarian offices in the City that participate in the City's spay and neuter voucher program. **Of the 66 veterinarian offices, 26 are sending in rabies vaccine certificates, or are planning to begin submitting the information, to the City.** The City of Los Angeles Office of Finance business license data shows that there are 379 veterinary offices registered to conduct business in the City.[19] This means there are up to 353 registered veterinary offices that may be subject to vaccine certificate submission recruitments that are not submitting any records.

According to LAAS managers, staffing constraints have limited the department's ability to identify veterinary offices that are not submitting vaccination records. The staffing constraints have also limited the department's ability to follow up on records that have been submitted by veterinary offices. LAAS processes for vaccine records have historically relied on the manual input of paper records by staff. LAAS has taken steps to improve the data entry process by implementing a new feature in Chameleon, the application LAAS uses to track animal licenses, which allows the department to input vaccine certificates in large batches and convert paper records into digital records.

Improving Dog Licensing Compliance Would Result in New Revenue

Opportunities exist to improve the dog licensing program in order to increase the rate at which pet owners license their dogs, and renew those licenses when they expire. LAAS currently does not attempt to enforce dog licenses after a second attempt to notify the owner they must renew their license. If an owner ignores the second notice, the department ceases future attempts to obtain licensing compliance for that animal. **In order to increase the dog license renewal rate, LAAS should consider implementing a process where a dog owner automatically receives an administrative citation and fine if an owner fails to license their animal or renew a license without providing information that would exempt them from doing so.** Examples of reasons an owner would not have to license a dog is if the dog has died, the owner gave away the dog, or if the owner moved.

For example, the City of San Jose Department of Animal Care and Services issues license renewal notices to owners before their pet's rabies vaccine expires, similar to LAAS. The pet

[19] All entities doing business within the City of Los Angeles need to obtain a Business Tax Registration Certificate from the City. There were 379 registered businesses under the North American Industry Classification System code for Veterinary Services (Code 541940).

owner has 31 days to renew their pet's license and pay the associated fee. If they do not, the owner will receive a second and final notice. If the pet owner fails to respond to the second and final notice, the City of San Jose automatically issues an administrative citation of $100. The pet owner then has 30 days to pay the fine. If the owner does not obtain the license and pay the administrative citation, the Department of Animal Care and Services will refer the outstanding citation to the City of San Jose's Finance Department for collection, and the outstanding fine accrues additional interest.[20] Ultimately, the Finance Department may refer the outstanding amount to a collection agency. San Jose issued 39,715 dog licenses in its 2025 fiscal year, compared to the City of Los Angeles, which issued 38,967. San Jose, with 997,000 residents, is about one-fourth the size of the City of Los Angeles.

It is important to note that California State law requires cities issuing administrative citations and fines to establish a hearing process allowing people to contest the citation before a neutral hearing officer.[21] The City of San Jose Department of Animal Care and Services has an appeal process allowing pet owners to complete an application for citation dismissal and submit supporting documentation. Depending on the circumstances, the neutral hearing officer may dismiss the citation. If LAAS were to implement an automatic citation program that is independent of the ACE Program, it would need to create a system for reviewing contested citation by a neutral official, which could be difficult based on staffing constraints.

Potential Revenue Based on the City's Estimated Dog Population

The American Veterinary Medical Association estimates that 45.5% of U.S. households own one or more dogs.[22] The U.S. Census estimates there are 1.46 million households in the City of Los Angeles.[23] **Based on American Veterinary Medical Association and U.S. Census estimates, there could be as many as 664,000 dogs in the City.**

U.S. Census and American Veterinary Medical Association estimates indicate the City could capture as much as $14.1 million in additional revenue by improving its licensing and enforcement programs. This projection assumes there are 664,376 dogs in the City that should be licensed. It also assumes that 93% of owners would obtain a 1-year license, and 7% of owners would obtain a 3-year license, which is consistent with license types selected by owners in FY 2025. While it is unlikely that the City would be able to license every dog in the City, this estimate indicates that there is a large number of dog owners in the City that have

[20] The citation may be dismissed if a $30 administrative fee and a $15 late fee is paid within 30 days of the date of the citation.

[21] California Government Code 53069.4.

[22] Based on 2024 American Veterinary Medical Association estimates.

[23] Based on 2023 U.S. Census estimates.

yet to obtain a license for their pet, which limits LAAS' ability to verify the vaccination status of dogs, and results in a missed revenue opportunity.

Table 12 below shows the total projected number of licenses and the resulting revenue possible with enhanced enforcement for licenses. We project LAAS could license an estimated 664,376 dogs, creating $14,971,519 in total revenue. That would represent a $14,093,409 increase in revenue over the amount collected in FY 2025, which was $878,110.

Table 12: Dog License Revenue Projection

1-Year License		3-Year License	
Percentage of 1-Year License Renewals	93%	Percentage of 3-Year License Renewals	7%
Number of Dogs Renewing with 1-Year License	616,262	Number of Dogs Renewing with 3-Year License	48,114
1-Year License Renewal Cost	$20	3-Year License Renewal Cost	$55
Revenue Projection for 1-Year License	$12,325,234	Revenue projection for 3-Year License	$2,646,285

It is important to note that achieving full compliance with the City's dog licensing requirements is not realistic for the department, and that the actual number of dogs within the City is unknown. However, any increase in licensing will enhance the department's regulation efforts, and result in additional revenue for the City. In FY 2025, LAAS issued a total of 38,967 dog licenses. That accounts for 6% of the City's dog population, assuming there are around 664,000 dogs in the City. Even if the City achieved an overall 50% licensing compliance rate, the City would generate approximately $6.6 million in additional revenue.

The generation of additional revenue through licensing could result in valuable funding for shelter operations and other animal welfare initiatives, if the City were to reinvest that revenue into LAAS programs. **For example, additional funding could support:**

- **Increasing hiring for animal care, veterinary care, and support positions** to improve animal care operations and animal intake and adoption facilitation operations;
- **Sustainable funding for animal enrichment contracts**, where partner organizations provide dogs housed in the shelters with exercise and play opportunities; and
- **Expansion of spay and neuter voucher programs, including special subsidies for income restricted City residents**, which would decrease the number of animals coming into the shelters by helping to limit the number of dogs and cats being born.

Allowing Veterinarians to Issue Licenses Could Further Improve Licensing Compliance

Under LAMC 53.15.4, LAAS can authorize licensed veterinarians, pet hospitals, pet stores, licensed kennels, and licensed breeders to issue dog licenses on behalf of the City. In exchange for partnering with the City, the provider receives $2 for each administered license. LAAS does not currently have a program authorizing veterinary service providers, licensed kennels, or licensed breeders to issue licenses. Such a program could allow the department to reach and educate more owners about licensing requirements. It could result in an increase in the number of licensed dogs in the City, as pet owners would be able to obtain vaccinations and licenses in one place.

The City Has Not Changed Dog License Fees Since 2011

The City's dog license fee of $20 (a fee of $16.50 and a tax of $3.50) was lower than the fees of several of its peers within the State of California. The City and County of San Francisco fee was $30, while the fees for Long Beach, Ventura County, and San Jose were $28, $25, and $25, respectively. The City of Los Angeles fee is in line with fees charged by the County of Los Angeles, and the County of San Diego.

Table 13: Cost of 1-Year Dog License as of May 2025 (Altered Dogs)

City of Los Angeles	City/County of San Francisco	City of Long Beach	Ventura County	City of San Jose	County of Los Angeles	County of San Diego	City of Fresno
$20	$30	$28	$25	$25	$20	$20	$12

LAAS should assess whether it should update its $16.50 dog license. The City charges fees to recover the cost of delivering a service. The City Council last approved a change to the dog license fee in 2011.[24] As City operating costs have continued to rise, the fees charged for administering dog licensing services have not. Based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic, the 1-year dog license fee of $16.50 in 2011 would be the equivalent of $23.51 in 2025, when adjusted for inflation.[25] That would mean the total cost of the dog license would be $27.01, including the dog license tax.

Recommendations

To improve administration of dog licenses and increase the number of owners obtaining licenses for their pets, LAAS should:

7. Implement a procedure to enforce City dog licensing requirements that includes, but is not limited to, automatic citations or fines for individuals that fail to respond to requests to license their pet.

[24] The dog license fee was last amended in 2011 through Ordinance 181882.

[25] Based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index for June 2025.

8. Using Office of Finance records or the business registration information of a similar organization, identify veterinary service providers operating in the City that are not submitting rabies vaccination certificate information to LAAS, as required by the LAMC, and educate those service providers about reporting requirements.
9. In consultation with the City Attorney's Office, evaluate City enforcement options for veterinary service providers that do not submit rabies vaccination certificate information to LAAS after they become aware of reporting requirements through LAAS education efforts.
10. Evaluate the long-term feasibility of allowing veterinarians to issue dog licenses, consistent with LAMC Section 53.15.4.
11. Conduct a fee study for dog licenses to determine the appropriate fee necessary to recover the cost of providing the service.

IV. Management of the LAAS Volunteer Program Needs Improvement

LAAS has a large and dedicated volunteer force that helps mitigate the department's longstanding staffing shortages and deliver important support to shelter animals. **In 2024, LAAS had approximately 1,000 volunteers each month, working a total of 137,928 hours over the course of the year.** Volunteers walk dogs and play with animals, help clean kennels, film and promote animals on social media, provide adoption counseling, work adoption events in the community, run the pet food pantry, and complete a variety of other tasks. Newer volunteers start with tasks such as greeting guests and cleaning, and then take on more responsibility, such as animal handling for dogs, cats, and small mammals.

Prior to beginning work as a volunteer, each volunteer must fill out an application, attend an orientation, and sign the LAAS Volunteer Rules and Guidelines to confirm their awareness of the standards and commit to adherence. **While the vast majority of volunteers are positive contributors at animal shelters, both LAAS staff and volunteers reported that tension between the two groups can create a difficult work environment for all parties. We found that LAAS does not have a formal system in place to address volunteer violations of the Volunteer Rules and Guidelines.**

Volunteers Were Generally Satisfied with Their Experience, But Expressed Some Concerns

We spoke with LAAS volunteers to assess their perceptions of the animal shelter work environment and animal shelter operations. Overall, volunteers enjoyed helping shelter animals and working with other volunteers, but many also expressed concerns about shelter conditions and the relationship between volunteers and shelter staff. We received the contact

information for all individuals that served as volunteers during our scope period. We narrowed this population down to the volunteers that were in the top 30% of hours volunteered over the past three fiscal years. We then randomly selected 60 and reached out to schedule interviews. Fourteen responded and agreed to be interviewed. We asked each interviewee the same set of questions—the first eight were based on a numerical scale and the rest were open-ended.

Overall, volunteers indicated satisfaction with their volunteer experience at City animal shelters. Of the 14 volunteers we interviewed, 13 said they would recommend volunteering at an animal shelter to a friend or family member. Volunteers enjoyed working with one another, and shared a common goal of improving the well-being of animals. However, volunteers' experiences with LAAS employees were mixed, with some saying that they had communication concerns, including being ignored when asking for assistance and not being updated about new policies and procedures. Table 14 below shows volunteer responses to survey questions related to whether they enjoyed their experience volunteering at shelters.

Table 14: Volunteer Enjoyment / Satisfaction

On a scale from 1 to 5, 5 being the most enjoyable, how much do you:	
Enjoy volunteering with LAAS	3.8
Enjoy working with other volunteers	4.8
Enjoy working with LAAS staff	2.9

Although volunteers expressed satisfaction with many aspects of volunteering, they expressed concern about the shelters themselves, particularly in the areas of crowding and staffing. **Volunteers generally felt that shelters were crowded, and that the number of employees was insufficient to fully care for the animals under the City's care.** Volunteers also expressed some concerns about unnecessary euthanasia determinations. Table 15 below shows volunteer responses to survey questions related to the well-being of shelter animals.

Table 15: Volunteer Opinions About Animal Welfare

On a scale from 1 to 5, 5 being the most concerned, how concerned are you about:	
Crowding	4.1
Understaffing	4.1
Animal Treatment	2.9
Adoption Rates	2.8
Euthanasia decisions	3.8

As volunteers are an important part of the animal sheltering system, LAAS should continue to take steps to understand volunteer concerns, solicit ideas and feedback, and foster improved working relationships between volunteers and LAAS employees.

LAAS Lacks a Formal System for Managing Volunteer Code of Conduct Issues

The Volunteer Rules and Guidelines include 21 guidelines covering a variety of topics ranging from monthly volunteer hour requirements, to protective clothing, to interacting with staff and the public. When volunteers sign the Volunteer Rules and Guidelines, they acknowledge several guidelines. Those guidelines include, but are not limited to, the following:

- I am representing the City of Los Angeles and the Department of Animal Services as a volunteer, and will demonstrate appropriate behavior and communication with staff, other City employees and the public and follow the City's standards of conduct.
- I will not be rude or use inappropriate language to the public or to any full/part-time staff.
- I will not undermine the efforts of LAAS staff to perform their duties, nor interfere during any interaction/transaction between staff and a member of the public at any time, and I understand that I should not distract or interfere with members of any construction or repair crew.
- I will not speak on behalf of the City of Los Angeles or LAAS, or give the impression that I am doing so, without direct authorization from LAAS. I will direct any media inquiries intended for the City or LAAS to the Public Relations Director.

See the complete Volunteer Rules and Guidelines policy in **Appendix H**.

In addition to the Volunteer Rules and Guidelines, LAAS volunteers are also subject to the City of Los Angeles Workplace Equity Policy. This policy prohibits abusive conduct and bullying, among other requirements. Prohibitions include, but are not limited to:

- inappropriately directing profanity or shouting at another person;
- criticizing a person, their opinions, or actions persistently, with malice, or without a legitimate business reason;
- deliberately sabotaging or impeding a person's work;
- spreading malicious rumors, gossip, or innuendo; and
- sending via email or text, posting, or sharing online any objectively negative, harmful, false, or derogatory content about someone else, including the sharing of personal or private information about someone else and thereby causing embarrassment or humiliation

The LAAS Volunteer Rules and Guidelines include an acknowledgement that volunteers who fail to follow the guidelines may be suspended or terminated.[26] Each shelter has at least one

[26]LAAS volunteers serve in an "at-will capacity". LAAS reserves the right to release a volunteer at any time, for any reason. LAAS does not have to prove "just cause" (like poor performance or misconduct) in order to release a volunteer.

ACT that is a Volunteer Liaison that coordinates the volunteer activities for that site. When the liaison is concerned about a volunteer's behavior or alleges a violation of the Volunteer Rules and Guidelines, they report it to the department's Volunteer Coordinator, who further investigates the issue and determines whether corrective action or removal is necessary. The department tries to implement a progressive discipline system for volunteers.

According to LAAS staff, the department addresses most issues with verbal counseling. For more egregious conduct violations, the Volunteer Coordinator creates a discipline report detailing the improper conduct, and specific guideline violations. Serious violations can result in suspension or removal of the volunteer.

LAAS has not developed a formal discipline administration policy or program to assist staff in addressing improper conduct by volunteers, nor does it have guidelines outlining the range of disciplining outcomes suitable for improper conduct.[27] The department also does not have a discipline log or system to track these cases to ensure that verbal counseling, suspensions, and releases are being applied in a fair, consistent manner. According to LAAS staff, ensuring the consistent administration of volunteer discipline is difficult.

While the majority of volunteers work hard to improve the lives of animals and provide important support to shelter employees, there are instances of volunteers conducting themselves in a manner that does not impact shelter operations in a positive way, and is not in line with conduct expectations for volunteers. In some cases, volunteers engage in activities that undermine shelter employees' ability to manage shelter animals.

LAAS was able to identify and provide eight volunteer discipline cases during the audit. However, LAAS does not maintain a separate file or tracking system for discipline cases, and the department could not provide assurance that they provided all available discipline cases which occurred during the audit scope period. We reviewed the volunteer discipline files and identified the following examples of volunteer conduct that does not align with Volunteer Rules and Guidelines.

- Volunteers being selective about who can adopt animals, which undermines the department's goal to provide new homes for animals in the shelters and puts the City at risk of discrimination complaints.

[27] City procedures related to alleged or substantiated misconduct by a City employee are codified in the Los Angeles City Charter, Civil Service Commission rules, and Personnel Department Policy. Personnel Policy 33.2, *Guide to Disciplinary Standards*, outlines specific penalty ranges for employee misconduct, and establishes a progressive discipline matrix to assist personnel managers in making discipline decisions in a consistent manner.

- Volunteers failing to report bite incidents, which can pose a risk to staff, volunteers, and potential adopters and puts the shelter at risk of not following proper bite protocol.
- Volunteers making threatening or unprofessional comments to others working in the shelter, which creates a difficult work environment.
- Volunteers misrepresenting themselves as speaking for the department, which can harm the relationship of the department with partner organizations.

LAAS has allowed volunteers to continue to work in shelters despite having engaged in conduct that violates the volunteer code of conduct. In addition to documented cases of volunteers violating the Volunteer Rules and Guidelines, we spoke to multiple LAAS staff that said they had been yelled at, cursed at, and threatened by volunteers, only for the volunteer to receive a verbal warning or a suspension and reinstatement.

A perception among some LAAS staff is that releasing some volunteers has been difficult in the past due to pressure from other volunteers, and sometimes Animal Services Commission members. Having a clear policy for addressing alleged and confirmed cases of volunteers violating the Volunteer Rules and Guidelines would allow the department to increase transparency around the process, create a shared understanding of rules and expectations, and help to ensure the department handles cases in a consistent and fair manner.

LAAS Does Not Conduct Background Checks of Volunteers

Volunteers at the Los Angeles Zoo and the Recreation and Parks Department must undergo a Live Scan or fingerprint background check prior to serving as a volunteer. Live Scan fingerprinting digitally captures an individual's fingerprints so that they may be transmitted electronically to the State of California Department of Justice and/or the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This process allows the departments to receive a background check report. Background checks are important for Recreation and Parks in particular because volunteers commonly work with children.

Unlike the Los Angeles Zoo and Recreation and Parks Department, LAAS does not require volunteers to undergo a background check. According to LAAS managers, the department has considered volunteer background checks in the past. However, LAAS managers said Live Scan costs are an expense that LAAS may not be able to absorb given the number of volunteers working in shelters. While the cost of the Live Scan could be the responsibility of the volunteers, LAAS is concerned that pushing the cost onto volunteers would reduce the number of volunteers. Managers also believed that background checks would only ever be necessary for volunteers working unsupervised in the field.

Although LAAS volunteers primarily work under the supervision of LAAS employees, they work in City facilities, and they interact with members of the public, and animals on a regular basis. Some volunteers also have access to kennels. LAAS should consider introducing a background check as part of the volunteer application process.

Recommendations

To improvement management of the shelter volunteer program and facilitate fair, consistent disciplinary proceedings, LAAS should:

12. Develop a policy for responding to Volunteer Rules and Guidelines violations that includes fact finding procedures and requirements, penalty ranges for substantiated violations, and factors for consideration when making discipline or termination determinations.
13. Assess the feasibility of implementing background check protocol for volunteers. The assessment can include a background check process for all volunteers, or a background check process for volunteers deemed to be in roles requiring a level of public trust that would necessitate a background check.
14. LAAS should take steps to understand volunteer concerns, solicit ideas and feedback, and foster improved working relationships between volunteers and LAAS employees.

V. LAAS Controls Over Microchips Need Improvements

California law requires dogs and cats exiting the shelter system to be microchipped for identification purposes.[28] A microchip is a chip the size of a grain of rice that is implanted under an animal's skin. LAAS microchips dogs, cats, and rabbits prior to the animal leaving the shelter. Each microchip carries a unique identifier and is registered to an owner at the time of an animal's adoption. Microchip information, including the animal's basic information and the owner's information, is stored within LAAS' animal management system, Chameleon. LAAS also registers microchip data with 24Petwatch, the microchip manufacturer. Registered microchips help shelters and animal care facilities identify a pet's owner when an animal is lost.

As part of the adoption process, LAAS charges $15 for the implanting of microchips, or the re-registration of an animal that already has a microchip. Microchip revenue goes to the Animal Welfare Trust Fund. In 2012, the Controller's Office released an audit that found that LAAS had "an unexplained discrepancy of $125,000 between actual revenue generated based on the number of microchips implanted during the last two fiscal years." The 2012 audit did not

[28] California Food and Agriculture Code 31108.3 and 31752.1, and LAMC 53.15.5 Electronic Animal Identification Device.

determine, and LAAS did not identify, the cause of the discrepancy. We did not examine inventory management controls in other areas within the shelters.

Microchip Inventory Management Needs Improvement

LAAS, through its Administrative Services Division, orders microchips in bulk, with their last purchase in 2023 for 49,800 microchips.[29] Each bulk purchase lasts approximately three to four years, and the division orders more microchips when inventory is running low. The centralized microchip inventory is stored at the Administrative Services Division office. Typically, on a biweekly basis, the division administers microchips to shelters based on requests received from animal shelters.

At the shelters, veterinary staff implant the microchips, which are single-use. Each shelter maintains a paper microchip log to track the usage of microchips. The log contains the barcodes of successfully issued microchips that LAAS staff have logged in Chameleon. If the implantation of a microchip fails, LAAS staff also record the barcode of the failed microchip in the log. Shelters are expected to send the completed logs to the Administrative Services Division.

However, LAAS' current system for managing microchips is informal and LAAS does not have an established system in place to track the microchip inventory or microchip usage. Specifically, LAAS does not maintain a formal inventory count, and does not conduct any regular inventory audits. According to Administrative Services Division staff, shelters also have not been consistently submitting microchip logs. Improving controls over the microchip inventory would help the department decrease the risk of microchips being misused or becoming lost.

Internal control best practices recommend that, at a minimum, LAAS implement relevant internal procedures to ensure proper tracking and usage of microchips. [30] LAAS has a Microchip SOP, which requires the Administrative Services Division to, on a quarterly basis, audit shelter's usage of microchips to ensure that implanted microchips are properly documented, and that all microchips are accounted for before issuing additional microchips. The Microchip SOP was last revised in 2013. According to LAAS staff, the division does not have the staffing capacity to conduct regular audits and monitoring, and the SOP is dated and no longer reflects the department's microchip practices.

The Process for Monitoring Microchip Transactions Needs Improvement

LAAS records microchip sales in Chameleon when an employee implants a microchip into an animal and when an LAAS staff re-register a microchip that is already implanted into an

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[29] The purchase of 49,800 microchips costs $136,950 (before Sales Tax), which is $2.75 per chip.

[30] U.S. Government Accountability Office *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*.

animal. The recording of microchip sales by accounting is manual and labor intensive. Each day, shelter staff enter all sales into a Microsoft Excel worksheet, which the Administrative Services Division then compiles on a monthly basis for revenue reconciliation with an Office of Finance report detailing bank deposit information.[31] LAAS administrative staff compile monthly revenue reports, which are then used to develop a yearly report.

However, LAAS' accounting and reconciling process does not account for actual microchip sales or transactions in Chameleon, and it is not possible to reconcile transactions in Chameleon data with the microchip revenues recorded in Microsoft Excel and Office of Finance reports. The annual revenue reports do not track whether a transaction is for the implantation of a microchip or the re-registration of an existing microchip to a new owner. Chameleon also does not record microchip fees collected during the adoption of an animal, as the microchip fee is rolled up into the total adoption fee. Chameleon records microchip fees for adoptions as $0. The department should take steps to change its transaction tracking procedures to allow for reconciliations and improved monitoring.

Recommendations

To enhance departmental oversight over animal microchips, LAAS should:

15. Update microchip management procedures to ensure (1) the department can monitor microchip inventory levels and usage, and (2) the department can use Chameleon transaction records to conduct reconciliations.

Conclusion

LAAS manages an overwhelming volume of animals with insufficient staffing and outdated policies. Persistent, severe crowding can compromise animal welfare and create unsafe conditions for shelter employees and volunteers. Implementing our recommendations will help to address key crowding, operational, and administration risks facing the department, and help to create an environment that supports both the community and shelter animals. The City must prioritize these actions to ensure LAAS shelters meet their public safety and animal care responsibilities effectively and humanely.

[31] The Office of Finance's report, CashWiz, shows the amount of cash and credit card payments collected and deposited into the bank.

Recommendation Table

Number	Recommendation
Responsible Entity: Los Angeles Animal Services	
1	Conduct a review of existing SOPs and (1) establish or update SOPs to reflect current LAAS operations and ensure alignment with industry best practices, and (2) consolidate or eliminate obsolete, duplicative, or unnecessary policies.
2	Establish a formal procedure and schedule for the regular evaluation and updating of SOPs.
3	Develop and conduct regular training for LAAS staff and volunteers to ensure shelter personnel and volunteers are aware of adopted SOPs.
4	Establish a policy limiting the intake of animals voluntarily surrendered when a shelter can no longer provide adequate, humane care to animals.
5	Clarify procedures in the At-Risk Dog Protocol related to space-based euthanasia determinations.
6	Develop a recruiting, hiring, and funding plan allowing the department to maintain an animal care staffing level consistent with best practice recommended by the National Animal Care and Control Association's or a similar recognized organization within the animal shelter or animal care field. The department should submit the plan to the Mayor and City Council for consideration.
7	Implement a procedure to enforce City dog licensing requirements that includes, but is not limited to, automatic citations or fines for individuals that fail to respond to requests to license their pet.
8	Using Office of Finance records or the business registration information of a similar organization, identify veterinary service providers operating in the City that are not submitting rabies vaccination certificate information to LAAS, as required by the LAMC, and educate those service providers about reporting requirements.
9	In consultation with the City Attorney's Office, evaluate City enforcement options for veterinary service providers that do not submit rabies vaccination certificate information to LAAS after they become aware of reporting requirements through LAAS education efforts.
10	Evaluate the long-term feasibility of allowing veterinarians to issue dog licenses, consistent with LAMC Section 53.15.4.

Number	Recommendation
11	Conduct a fee study for dog licenses to determine the appropriate fee necessary to recover the cost of providing the service.
12	Develop a policy for responding to Volunteer Rules and Guidelines violations that includes fact finding procedures and requirements, penalty ranges for substantiated violations, and factors for consideration when making discipline or termination determinations.
13	Assess the feasibility of implementing background check protocol for volunteers. The assessment can include a background check process for all volunteers, or a background check process for volunteers deemed to be in roles requiring a level of public trust that would necessitate a background check.
14	LAAS should take steps to understand volunteer concerns, solicit ideas and feedback, and foster improved working relationships between volunteers and LAAS employees.
15	Update microchip management procedures to ensure the (1) department can monitor microchip inventory levels and usage, and (2) the department can use Chameleon transaction records to conduct reconciliations.

LAAS Response

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CHIEF VETERINARIAN

June 25, 2026

Mr. Kenneth Mejia
Los Angeles City Controller
200 N. Main Street, Suite 300
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Controller Mejia,

On behalf of the Department of Animal Services (DAS), I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the thorough and careful audit of our programs and operations. We are grateful for the considerable time and effort that you and your team dedicated to this review. Your staff's engagement with our employees, thoughtful examination of our procedures and practices, and collaborative approach throughout the process were greatly valued. The audit provided an important opportunity to assess our operations and identify areas where we can continue to strengthen our services and accountability.

We especially appreciate the constructive feedback and recommendations included in your report. The insights provided by your team will help guide our ongoing efforts to enhance efficiency, improve service delivery, and ensure that we are meeting the highest industry standards.

Brief Background

With fewer than 325 positions, DAS is responsible for protecting and promoting the welfare of animals and supporting public safety throughout Los Angeles. Our primary duties and responsibilities include:

- Enforcing local and state animal welfare laws and ordinances, pet licensing, and public safety
- Operating and maintaining the City's six animal shelters and providing care for 55,000 homeless, stray, injured, and surrendered animals, annually.
- Supporting public health and safety through investigating reports of animal cruelty, neglect, dangerous animals, and animal-related public safety concerns.
- Promoting pet adoptions, fostering, and responsible pet ownership.
- Administering animal licensing and vaccination compliance programs.
- Providing field services, including responding to animal emergencies, rescuing injured animals, and addressing nuisance animal complaints.
- Educating the public on animal care, humane treatment, and community animal programs.

Department of Animal Services Responses to Recommendations

Recommendation #1:
Conduct a review of existing SOPs and (1) establish or update SOPs to reflect current LAAS operations and ensure alignment with industry best practices, and (2) consolidate or eliminate obsolete, duplicative, or unnecessary policies.

DAS Response: DAS will re-establish an SOP Review Working Group consisting of: department management, shelter and field supervisors, and medical staff. When required, long-time volunteer program representatives, labor union representatives, Personnel Department liaisons and City Attorney (general counsel) will be consulted. The SOP Working Group will continue the work previously started; compiling a comprehensive inventory of existing SOPs, department directives, training documentation and volunteer policies. The SOP Review Working Group will conduct a gap analysis to determine if existing SOPs address current DAS operations, industry best practices, current City ordinances and other known and generally accepted animal welfare standards. The Working Group will then determine which existing SOPs to: retain as-is, revise, and archive. New SOPs will be developed and drafted as-needed.

Recommendation #2:
Establish a formal procedure and schedule for the regular evaluation and updating of SOPs.

DAS Response: DAS will establish an SOP Governance Program that will outline timeframes for when SOPs will be reviewed and updated (annual, every two years, as-needed, etc.) DAS will establish SOP Working Group sub-groups that will be assigned to update SOPs in key operational areas, regularly making changes that align with industry best practices and other internal operational changes.

DAS will create a SOP related to governance and protocols for updating existing and drafting new SOPs.

Recommendation #3:
Develop and conduct regular training for LAAS staff and volunteers to ensure shelter personnel and volunteers are aware of adopted SOPs.

DAS Response: DAS will incorporate all updated and new SOPs into its training curriculum for new staff and volunteers. DAS management and supervisory staff will review each SOP to determine if training refresher sessions are required to ensure staff adherence and the frequency for any required refresher training sessions. DAS will develop a volunteer SOP training curriculum related to key volunteer roles/functions.

Recommendation #4:
Establish a policy limiting the intake of animals voluntarily surrendered when a shelter can no longer provide adequate, humane care to animals.

DAS Response: DAS will develop shelter specific Capacity for Animal Care Intake Policies that determine each location's threshold for animal intake based on criteria such as: kennel capacity and occupancy, staffing levels, medical emergencies (i.e. disease outbreaks), etc. DAS will partner with UC Davis or similar academic agency with animal welfare expertise to develop each shelter-specific

policy, following the example used for the South Los Angeles/Chesterfield Square shelter location. The policies will provide guidance for staff regarding intake scheduling, owner surrender diversion resources, engaging rescue partners and other pet owner support programs.

Recommendation #5:
Clarify procedures in the At-Risk Dog Protocol related to space-based euthanasia determinations.

DAS Response: DAS will review the At-Risk Dog Protocol with shelter supervisors, the medical team and the department's legal counsel to assess the current language to provide clarity related to space-based euthanasia determinations, and with the intention of protocol consistency across teams and departments.

Recommendation #6:
Develop a recruiting, hiring, and funding plan allowing the department to maintain an animal care staffing level consistent with best practice recommended by the National Animal Care and Control Association's or a similar recognized organization within the animal shelter or animal care field. The department should submit the plan to the Mayor and City Council for consideration.

DAS Response: DAS is not able to recruit and hire staffing outside of the City of Los Angeles' established policies and practices for recruitment and hiring. Every year, through the City's budget request process, DAS assesses its staffing levels and makes requests for additional staffing based on the Mayor's Office directives and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. All submitted budget requests require thorough justification in which DAS provides all related industry standard information required to comprehend why the department has the need for the requested resources. Representatives from the Mayor's Office, the Controller's Office and relevant Council offices ask clarifying questions related to our requests every year. DAS is not able to recruit or hire to fill positions beyond its budgeted position authorities. DAS will continue to make budget requests for required staffing resources that are reflective of industry best practices.

Recommendation #7:
Implement a procedure to enforce City dog licensing requirements that includes, but is not limited to, automatic citations or fines for individuals that fail to respond to requests to license their pet.

DAS Response: DAS agrees that with additional resources the department should increase enforcement of licensing requirements. However, DAS disagrees with the recommendation to issue automatic citations and fines for individuals that fail to respond to requests to license their pets. As noted in the audit report, there are valid reasons that a pet owner may not respond to renewal notifications such as the licensed pet dying or moving outside of the City's jurisdiction. Issuing an automatic citation and/or fine in these cases would be administratively burdensome to both residents and City staff that would then need to reverse these punitive measures.

DAS will also consider conducting an RFP to obtain a third-party licensing vendor or processor which would assist with conducting outreach, education, etc. and could also reduce current programmatic costs, driving revenue and increasing Return to Owner (RTO) rates.

Recommendation #8:
Using Office of Finance records or the business registration information of a similar organization, identify veterinary service providers operating in the City that are not submitting rabies vaccination certificate information to LAAS, as required by the LAMC, and educate those service providers about reporting requirements.

DAS Response: DAS has already conducted some outreach to veterinary service providers that currently conduct business with the department but have not been reporting as required requesting that they start providing the information so it may be automatically uploaded into Chameleon. DAS will continue this outreach and create a provider database using City business registration records maintained by the Office of Finance.

Recommendation #9:
In consultation with the City Attorney's Office, evaluate City enforcement options for veterinary service providers that do not submit rabies vaccination certificate information to LAAS after they become aware of reporting requirements through LAAS education efforts.

DAS Response: DAS will work with the department's general counsel to review the department's authority to enforce the requirement to provide rabies vaccination certificate information and any administrative penalties, citation authority and/or permit-related enforcement options.

Recommendation #10:
Evaluate the long-term feasibility of allowing veterinarians to issue dog licenses, consistent with LAMC Section 53.15.4.

DAS Response: At some point in the future, DAS can conduct a feasibility study to determine the legal issues, technology requirements, payment processing requirements, data integration issues, and security controls concerns related to implementing a program where local veterinarians are able to issue dog licenses on behalf of the City. The study would also include a cost-benefit analysis to determine if the revenue yield for such a program would outweigh any operational, administrative and financial burdens in order to implement. If determined to be beneficial, the department could begin the program roll-out as a pilot program with a few select participants.

Recommendation #11:
Conduct a fee study for dog licenses to determine the appropriate fee necessary to recover the cost of providing the service.

DAS Response: Using the estimated numbers included in the audit report, only 6% of the City's dog-owning residents are in compliance with the City's licensing requirements. This indicates that increased outreach and education is required to obtain greater compliance. The department should prioritize increased adherence with the current law at the current rate before considering any increase. Increasing the cost of a license at present or in the near future could serve as a deterrent for compliance and can also be considered as punitive for the estimated 6% currently complying. This recommendation should be tabled until compliance reaches a determined threshold.

Recommendation #12:
Develop a policy for responding to Volunteer Rules and Guidelines violations that includes fact finding procedures and requirements, penalty ranges for substantiated violations, and factors for consideration when making discipline or termination determinations.

DAS Response: Every situation is different and nuanced and is treated as such in consultation with Personnel Department representatives and the department's general counsel. Trying to standardize the investigation approach and outcomes may not be appropriate because there would likely be marked differences for each case. DAS may consider maintaining a log related to department responses to volunteer guideline violations so that in the cases where the violations are similar, previous outcomes may be considered.

Recommendation #13:
Assess the feasibility of implementing background check protocol for volunteers. The assessment can include a background check process for all volunteers, or a background check process for volunteers deemed to be in roles requiring a level of public trust that would necessitate a background check.

DAS Response: DAS has considered implementing a background check requirement for volunteers in roles requiring a level of public trust. However, implementation is not feasible unless the potential volunteers bear the burden of the costs for the background check as the department has no budget for such expenditures.

DAS will incorporate a request for funding for this purpose in future department fiscal year budget requests.

Recommendation #14:
LAAS should take steps to understand volunteer concerns, solicit ideas and feedback, and foster improved working relationships between volunteers and LAAS employees.

DAS Response: DAS management currently meets with volunteers on a regular basis in an effort to understand volunteer concerns, solicit ideas and feedback and foster improved working relationships between volunteers and DAS employees. DAS will consider further engaging volunteers through means such as: annual surveys, town halls, focus groups or suggestion boxes and/or an electronic suggestion portal. In the coming year the GM will work with the volunteer director to update and modernize the volunteer handbook and develop volunteer onboarding processes and protocol to demonstrate transparent processes and support volunteers' understanding of their roles and agency protocols.

Recommendation #15:
Update microchip management procedures to ensure the (1) department can monitor microchip inventory levels and usage, and (2) the department can use Chameleon transaction records to conduct reconciliations.

DAS Response: DAS will further develop and enforce formal microchip inventory management procedures. Administrative and shelter staff will work together to maintain inventory controls. Inventory receiving and usage logs must be maintained and updated regularly. Both administrative and shelter staff must ensure that inventory is safely and securely stored. Staff should conduct

semi-annual or annual cycle counts to reconcile inventory with log records. Chameleon records should also be used in the reconciliation process. Also, the microchip cost for adoptions should be broken out in Chameleon to better reconcile revenues from microchip sales.

Conclusion

Thank you again for your commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement across City operations. We value our partnership with your office and appreciate the professionalism, expertise, and diligence demonstrated throughout this audit.

Respectfully submitted,



Gabrielle Amster
General Manager

Attachment: DAS Recommendation Responses and Implementation Plans

Auditor Comments on LAAS' Response

Of the 15 recommendations contained in this report, LAAS agreed with 12 recommendations, and disagreed with 3 recommendations. We encourage LAAS to fully implement the recommendations it disagrees with.

- **LAAS disagreed with the recommendation to develop a hiring, recruitment, and funding plan** to be considered by the Mayor and the City Council (Recommendation 6). LAAS said that it cannot initiate hiring and funding activities beyond the budgeted authorities prescribed by the Mayor and Council during the City's budget development process.

  Auditor Comment

  Conducting an analysis of staffing needs, separate from the annual budget development process, will provide City officials responsible for budget decisions with the information needed to make informed decisions about animal care requirements and improving the department's capacity for care.

- **LAAS disagreed with the recommendation to conduct a fee study for dog licenses to determine the appropriate fee necessary for cost recovery** (Recommendation 11). The department said that given the very low rate at which owners comply with license requirements, a fee increase could deter owners from complying with the license requirement and would be punitive for those individuals that do obtain licenses for their dogs.

  Auditor Comment

  Ensuring fees recover the true costs of providing a service is necessary to ensure sound fiscal operations, especially during periods of budgetary uncertainty. Consideration of whether the current fee is adequate for cost recovery purposes should not be contingent on the rate at which dog owners are obtaining licenses for their pets.

- **LAAS disagreed with the recommendation to develop a policy for responding to alleged Volunteer Rules and Guidelines violations** (Recommendation 12). The department said that each case is different, and that standardizing its approach for reviewing alleged violations may not be appropriate. The department said it already coordinates with the Personnel Department and City Attorney's Office when addressing volunteer conduct issues.

  Auditor Comment

  The department is correct that each case related to alleged violations of the Volunteer Rules and Guidelines or other City policies may be unique. However, the

unique circumstances of cases is a key reason that the department should standardize its processes for vetting allegations of improper conduct, and making discipline determinations. The current ad-hoc process for managing these cases provides insufficient assurance that the department is addressing cases in an appropriate and consistent manner. Ensuring appropriate, consistent handling of cases should be a priority for the department, given the potential for improper conduct by volunteers to impact workplace safety and the well-being of fellow volunteers and LAAS employees.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Objectives

We conducted an audit of the Los Angeles Animal Services' management of the city's six shelters. Our audit objectives sought to answer the following questions:

- Do LAAS policies and procedures align with organizational goals and best practices?
- Does LAAS have the staffing and operational capacity necessary to meet the demand for animal sheltering?
- Is LAAS able to manage the animal shelter population in a manner that ensures animals under its care receive adequate care?
- Do opportunities exist to increase revenue to support animal shelter operations and care programs?

Scope

The audit scope includes activities related to managing the population of animals in the City's shelters, shelter resources and staffing, and processes related to animal licensing. The scope period for the audit is FY 2021 to FY 2025. We primarily examined shelter operations related to the population of cats and dogs, as they make up 85% of the shelter population.

As part of this audit, we evaluated the resources available for animal shelter operations, including staffing and the volunteer program. We also followed up on a finding from the Office of the Controller's *Audit of Fiscal Operations at the Los Angeles Department of Animal Services*, published in 2012. The 2012 audit found that the department did not have adequate controls for managing the administration of microchips.

We did not evaluate the health and wellness of animals, or the veterinary care provided in shelters. We also did not evaluate the shelter facilities and animal enclosures, or maintenance and cleanliness of shelter facilities.

Methodology

To complete this audit, we:

- Reviewed laws and best practices related to public animal shelters, including the California Food and Agriculture Code and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' (ASV) *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, 2022*.
- Conducted a staffing analysis using LAAS staffing information and the National Animal Care and Control Association's *Formula for Determining Kennel Staffing Needs* and filled Animal Care Technician positions.
- Conducted interviews with LAAS employees, including animal care staff, financial management staff, veterinarians, and management.

- Conducted benchmarking against other government operated shelter systems in California, including the City of San Jose, City of Fresno, City of Long Beach, City and County of San Francisco, County of Ventura, and County of San Diego. The benchmarking analysis focused on no-kill policies, owner surrender policies, and animal licensing policies.
- Evaluated LAAS' SOPs to determine their alignment with the Food and Agriculture Code and ASV Guidelines.
- Analyzed shelter data, including animal intake and outcomes, the average daily shelter population, average length of stay, euthanasia rates, and live release rates, to assess trends related to shelter population crowding.
- Conducted site visits at the South Los Angeles and East Valley animal shelters.
- Interviewed fourteen LAAS volunteers about their experiences with City animal shelters.
- Reviewed policies, processes, and controls associated with volunteer conduct issues, and reviewed available volunteer discipline files.
- Reviewed dog licensing programs and enforcement efforts, which included an assessment of data recorded in Chameleon in order to estimate potential revenue if the City were to increase the number of licenses it issues.
- Reviewed LAAS' SOPs and controls related to microchip purchasing, issuance, and tracking.

How We Ensure Quality

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix A: List of LAAS Standard Operating Procedures

SOP Name	Date Issued
ADMIN 01 Administrative Appeals	January 21, 2009
ADMIN 02 Barking Dog Procedures with Attach	February 26, 2010
ADMIN 03 Community Room SOP Final	March 23, 2009
ADMIN 04 Donation SOP Rev 2-24-11	February 22, 2011
ADMIN 04 Donation SOP	December 18, 2008
ADMIN 05 DTIME	March 25, 2009
ADMIN 06 Filming on Department Property SOP	November 4, 2008
ADMIN 07 Home-Garaging of City-Owned Vehicles	January 30, 2009
ADMIN 08 IT Policies, Procedures & General Info	March 31, 2009
ADMIN 09 Media Contacts Rev Dec 2010	December 13, 2010
ADMIN 10 Mileage Reimbursement SOP final 3-22-09	March 25, 2009
ADMIN 11 Public Record Requests final	April 3, 2009
ADMIN 12 Responding to Complaints- final 4.1.09	April 1, 2009
ADMIN 13 Risk Management and Reduction Plan SOP	December 23, 2008
ADMIN 14 Subpoena and Court Appearances final 4-2-09	April 2, 2009
ADMIN 15 Form Gen 16 - PES	None
ADMIN 15 Travel Final	March 10, 2009
ADMIN 16 Vehicle Accident SOP	January 13, 2009
ADMIN 17 Surplus In-Kind Donations SOP	February 26, 2010
ADMIN 18 Microchip SOP	October 4, 2013
ADMIN 19 Accounting for Equipment and Inventory	July 22, 2014
ADMIN 20 Administrative Hearings	March 10, 2015
ADMIN 21 SOP LAASEE	March 10, 2015
FIELD 01 Animal Control Device	March 10, 2009
FIELD 03 Unloading Animals at Shelters Policy Rev	June 15, 2016
FIELD 04 Cat Trapping	April 18, 2024
FIELD 05 Radio Communications and Dispatch Procedures	October 26, 2015
FIELD 06 Vehicle Use and Maintenance	November 1, 2015
FIELD 07 Dispatch (Euthanasia) of Animal - In Field	April 22, 2010
FIELD 08 Dog Trapping Final	March 16, 2009
FIELD 09 Enforcement Authority - Federal, State, County Land	May 6, 2009
FIELD 10 Eviction Intake and Disposition SOP	April 27, 2009
FIELD 13 Issuing Citations final	March 26, 2009
FIELD 14 Livestock Trailer Loading-Unloading Final	March 23, 2009
FIELD 15 Loading and Unloading Animals from ARV final	March 26, 2009
FIELD 17 Priority of Service Calls - Final	April 1, 2009
FIELD 18 Returning City Owned Property Final	March 16, 2009

SOP Name	Date Issued
FIELD 20 Safety Equipment and Equip Safety final	March 11, 2009
FIELD 21 Sentry Dog final	April 27, 2009
FIELD 22 Beverly Hills - Services Provided To	March 9, 2009
FIELD 23 Small Animal Rescue Team (SMART)	May 13, 2009
FIELD 24 spay neuter ordinance activities and notices final	March 12, 2009
FIELD 25 Officer Uniform Standards FINAL	April 15, 2009
FIELD 26 Vehicle Safety final	March 10, 2009
FIELD 27 Wildlife - General Procedures final	June 6, 2011
FIELD 28 Paintball Gun Final	March 23, 2009
FIELD 29 Wildlife Trapping Final	March 23, 2009
FIELD 30 Investigations - Dangerous Animal Policy final	November 17, 2009
FIELD 31 Roosters - Limit Nov 2009	December 1, 2009
FIELD 32 Wolf Hybrids	February 26, 2010
FIELD 33 Range Qualification	June 2, 2011
FIELD 34 Firearms Policy	December 6, 2011
FINANCE 02 Cashiering SOP	April 20, 2009
FINANCE 03 Change Fund	April 2, 2009
FINANCE 05 Gift Certificate SOP	December 23, 2008
FINANCE 06 Miscellaneous Receipts	January 31, 2013
FINANCE 07 Policy-Petty Cash.	January 28, 2009
FINANCE 08 Purchasing and Inventory	December 4, 2009
FINANCE 09 Purchase Card SOP	April 8, 2009
FINANCE 10 Restitution of Department Expenses	July 22, 2010
FINANCE 11 Trap Rental & Refund	December 17, 2009
FINANCE 12 Low Income Residents Very Low-Income Limit for FY 2010-11	October 1, 2010
FINANCE 13 Senior and Disabled Very Low-Income Limit for Fiscal Year 2010-11	October 1, 2010
FINANCE 14 Voids, Refunds, Fee Reduction, and Waivers SOP	January 9, 2009
FINANCE 15 Issuing a Breeding Permit Final	April 9, 2010
MED 01 AFE - Emergency Services SOP	March 16, 2009
MED 02 Animal Cruelty Medical Reports	March 23, 2009
MED 03 Assessment and Care of Neonate Kittens Rev Final	March 24, 2009
MED 04 Chemicals and Hazardous Materials Final	March 24, 2009
MED 05 D-300	February 27, 2012
MED 06 Euthanasia Rev	August 6, 2010
MED 07 Good Sam Program	December 13, 2010
MED 08 Immunization Deworming Program	March 23, 2009
MED 09 Isolation Ward Rev	March 23, 2009
MED 10 Pregnant animals	March 24, 2009

SOP Name	Date Issued
MED 11 Rabies Quarantine Program	March 24, 2009
OPS 01 Adoptable Animals	March 26, 2009
OPS 02 Adoption Procedures	February 27, 2012
OPS 03 Auctioning Animals SOP	May 5, 2016
OPS 04 Best Buddies Rev 4	August 4, 2009
OPS 05 Bottle Baby final	May 14, 2009
OPS 05.1 Bottle Baby Foster Program Addendum-Employee Responsibilities	May 13, 2009
OPS 06 Court Referral SOP	October 1, 2010
OPS 07 Employee Owned Animals	March 3, 2009
OPS 08 First Rights Final	March 23, 2009
OPS 10 Heart to Heart final	May 1, 2009
OPS 11 Impound Procedures, Hold Types and Owner Notification	September 16, 2010
OPS 12 Microchip Scanning Final	December 1, 2009
OPS 13 Missing, Escaped, Died and Stolen Animals Final	June 12, 2009
OPS 14 Redemption Procedures Final	March 27, 2009
OPS 15 Releasing Animals Rev 4-8-09	April 8, 2009
OPS 16 Senior for Senior Final	April 20, 2009
OPS 17 Showing of Animals at Animal Care Centers final	March 31, 2009
OPS 18 Sterilization Requirements Final	March 26, 2009
OPS 19 Stray and Feral Cats	October 26, 2010
OPS 20 Uniforms ACT-RVT final	April 16, 2009
OPS 21 Uniform Staff Appearance Standards final	April 13, 2009
OPS 22 Transferring animals Between Centers-final	August 17, 2009
OPS 23 Collecting Owner Surrender Fees Final	August 27, 2009
OPS 24 Personal Photography	September 24, 2009
OPS 25 Animal Ownership Disputes	December 16, 2009
OPS 26 Choke Chains, Harnesses and Other Collars	December 17, 2009
OPS 27 New Hope Discounts for Smaller Animals	January 5, 2010
OPS 28 New Hope Rescue Partner Program Alert	August 1, 2012
OPS 29 Available Animal Foster SOP	October 19, 2010
OPS 30 Twice Daily Feeding Schedule for Dogs SOP	November 2, 2010
OPS 31 Weighing Cats and Dogs Jan	January 13, 2011
OPS 32 BEST FRIENDS SELECTION PROCESS	April 2, 2012
OPS 33 MPA Procedures Final	November 12, 2012
OPS 34 Safety Bucket Contents	November 4, 2024
OPS 35 Breaking Up Dog Fights	November 4, 2024
PER 01 Personal Info Change	April 1, 2009
PER 02 COMMENDATIONS	April 1, 2009

SOP Name	Date Issued
PER 03 Conflict of Interest	April 1, 2009
PER 03 Code of Ethics	August 23, 1979
PER 04 Discipline	April 1, 2009
PER 04 Disciplinary Standards	None
PER 05 DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT	April 1, 2009
PER 06 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	April 1, 2009
PER 07 Drug and Alcohol	April 1, 2009
PER 07 Reasonable Suspicion Observation Form	September 12, 2008
PER 08 Training	April 1, 2009
PER 08 Specialized Training Agreement	None
PER 08 Specialized Training Request	None
PER 09 EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES	April 1, 2009
PER 10 Exit Interview	April 1, 2009
PER 11 FILLING VACANT POSITIONS	April 1, 2009
PER 12 Grievance Processing	April 1, 2009
PER 13 Hazing	April 1, 2009
PER 14 HIV and AIDS	April 1, 2009
PER 15 LICENSE AND CERTIFICATE	April 1, 2009
PER 16 Light Duty	May 10, 2022
PER 16 Injury Status Report	None
PER 17 EEO	April 1, 2009
PER 17 Where to File Complaints	None
PER 18 Workers Comp	April 1, 2009
PER 19 OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT	April 1, 2009
PER 19 Outside Employment Request Form	None
PER 20 Overtime	April 1, 2009
PER 21 Paygrade Advancement	April 1, 2009
PER 22 Personnel Files	April 1, 2009
PER 23 Reasonable Accommodation	April 1, 2009
PER 23 Executive Directive No. PE-1	August 31, 2004
PER 23 Lactation Policy	None
PER 23 Reasonable Accommodations Assessment Form	None
PER 24 REASSIGNMENTS	April 1, 2009
PER 25 Sexual Harassment Complaint	April 1, 2009
PER 26 Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Exp	April 1, 2009
PER 26 Executive Directive No. 12	June 6, 2008
PER 27 Sick Leave Improvement Program	April 1, 2009
PER 27 Supervisors Attendance Counseling Record	None

SOP Name	Date Issued
PER 27 Supervisors Guide to Sick Leave Use Improvement	March 2011
PER 28 TELEPHONE USAGE	April 1, 2009
PER 29 Vacation, Sick, Leave of Absence	February 22, 2012
PER 29(Attachment) FMLA Posting	None
PER 30 Employment Verification	April 1, 2009
PER 31 Welcoming Policy	April 1, 2009
PER 32 Work Schedule & Jury Duty	April 1, 2009
PER 33 WORKPLACE VIOLENCE	April 1, 2009
PER 34 Medical Services Return to Work Evaluation Procedures	None
PER 35 Outside Employment	September 27,2011
PER 36 Sign in and Sign Out Procedure for Employee Sign-In Sign-Out Log	November 7, 2014

Appendix B: OPS #11 Impound Procedures, Hold Types, and Owner Notification

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES
POLICIES and PROCEDURES

IMPOUND PROCEDURES, HOLD TYPES, AND OWNER NOTIFICATION

Date Issued: **September 16, 2010 (Rev.)** Division Code: **OPS 11**

POLICY
All employees must follow a consistent, system-wide procedure for bringing animals into the centers, notifying the animals' owners and processing the animals for proper release.

PROCEDURE
Any animal taken into custody by the Department shall be entered into Chameleon and provided automatically with an Animal Identification Number (A#). Employees shall determine, if necessary, which type of hold is to be placed on the animal and which notification is to be sent to the owners (if known).

Employees shall perform the following steps when an animal is brought into the **center:**

1. Determine what zip code the animal is from (location animal was picked up from by citizen).
2. Scan the animal for a Microchip (See Microchip Scanning Policy).
3. Determine whether the animal is stray, owned, or has a possible owner.
4. Ask for Identification from the Source-find or create a person record for Source.
5. Enter the animal into Chameleon.
6. Take a picture of the animal and attach it to the kennel card.
7. Take the animal to the medical ward (medical holding) for evaluation.
8. Place the animal in a kennel cage or run.

NOTE: If for any reason the employee believes animal cruelty was involved, immediately call a Registered Vet Technician (RVT) and Officer in Charge (OIC). Make sure to retain possession of the person's identification.

Employees shall perform the following steps when an animal is picked up in the **field:**

1. Radio dispatch that Officer has arrived to call.
2. Scan the animal for Microchip, if scanner is available (See Microchip Scanning Policy).
3. Take down Source Information (Chameleon should already have this entered or verified by Dispatch).
4. Load animal into Animal Rescue Vehicle (ARV) (See Loading/Unloading Policy).
5. Determine whether animal is in need of urgent medical attention.
6. Radio dispatch for completion time of call.
7. Return to care center and unload animal. (If animal is in need of urgent medical care, take directly to vet staff or proceed directly to AFE from location.)

8. Enter animal information into Chameleon.
9. Place in designated "ACO Unloading Area".
10. Attach kennel card to cage. Make sure to indicate any behavioral issues on the back of kennel card.
11. Provide water for animal.

NOTE: Refer to Unloading of Animals at Care Centers Policy.

The Employee booking in the animal shall do one of the following as it pertains to the animal in addition to the procedure above:

Owner Surrender – Employees shall charge an owner surrender fee as currently established. The 2009-2010 fee for dogs is $25 ($56 if picked up in the field) and $22 for cats ($53 if picked up in the field). Other animal surrender and pick-up fees can be checked in Chameleon. Be sure to use the current approved fee. Employees will bring up the Animal Profile Window, ask the Owner a series of questions sufficient to obtain as many answers as possible and place the answers in the Animal Profile Window. Owner must sign the Owner Surrender Form. (Located under Reports-F3). Animal becomes available for adoption immediately, upon surrender.

DOA (Dead on Arrival) – Employees will obtain information to book in the animal, either listing the home address and information from the owner or if from a person bringing in a stray, employees shall obtain information about where the animal was found. In all cases the animal must be booked in, however, no surrender fee is charged if the animal is not alive. Persons requesting pick-up of a dead animal should be referred to call the Bureau of Sanitation.

Stray – Employees shall obtain information of where animal was located. Stray animals will be held for four (4) days, not including the day the animal was booked in (legal holding period). Holidays and Monday will not be counted as part of the legal holding period and the animal will become available after the legal holding period. (Owner must provide proof of ownership to obtain animal before the fourth day.)

Evidence – When an animal is part of an ongoing investigation performed by our Officers or Animal Cruelty Task Force (ACTF), employees shall set the hold type in Chameleon as **Evidence** and set hold to **Y**. The review date shall be set for 30 days from the date the animal is brought in and can be changed in the event the animal is released at an earlier date. Animals under Evidence Hold are being held for the City Attorney or District Attorney cases or Potentially Dangerous Animal cases and must remain in the Department's custody until the animal is approved for release by the impounding officer or his/her immediate supervisor. Memos shall be placed in the Memo Window upon any change of the animal's review date (i.e., another 30 days). Memos shall also be entered pertaining to the animal's well being and should problems arise with the owner.

NOTE: Evidence animals will not be fostered without the Director of Field Operations' approval. Evidence animals shall not be fostered by city employees nor LAPD employees.

Personal Property – Animals impounded as personal property generally happen for 3 main reasons; the animal's owner is arrested, the animal's owner died, the animal's owner has a medical issue requiring hospitalization. Employees shall set the hold type in Chameleon as **Personal Property (PP)** and set hold to **Y** (Yes). The review date shall be set for **30** days from the date the animal was booked in. Employees shall collect information regarding the owner's whereabouts, if known/applicable. The impounding employee must immediately request that Clerical Staff send a notification form to the owner, by mail, to the last known address of the owner no later than the next postal business day. Clerical Staff will enter a memo indicating the date the letter was sent. Upon the thirtieth (30th) day, the animal shall become available for adoption, if no contact was received from the owner. It is at the discretion of the Animal Care Technician Supervisor or Lieutenant whether to continue the hold of the animal if contact with the owner is made, depending on the wishes or extenuating circumstances of the owner.

Possible Owner – Employees shall set the hold type in Chameleon as **Possible Owner (PO)** and set hold to **Y** (Yes). The review shall be set for seven (**7**) days after the date the animal was found to have a possible owner. The impounding employee must immediately request that Clerical Staff send a notification form to the owner's last known address no later than the next postal business day. The form will allow 7 days for the owner to redeem the animal. Clerical staff will enter a memo in Chameleon indicating the date the form was sent and will adjust the available date to seven (7) days after the date the letter is sent i.e. the animal is not available for adoption until the eighth day (day the letter is sent plus seven days) . If the identification is a Microchip, please follow the Microchip Scanning Policy.

NOTE: At any time it is discovered that an animal has a PO, regardless of the amount of time the animal has been impounded, the department must send notification to the PO and hold the animal for seven (7) days after the notification is sent.

Los Angeles Police Department HOLD – On occasion, LAPD will personally bring animals in or call our officers to an address and request we hold the animal(s) pending their (LAPD) investigation. Employees shall set the hold type in Chameleon as **LAPD** and set the hold to **Y** (Yes). The review shall be set for **30** days from the date the animal was booked in. The employee shall obtain as much owner information as possible and shall obtain the investigating LAPD officer's name and phone number. No animal will be released until the LAPD Officer releases the animal. The impounding employee must immediately request Clerical Staff send a notification form to the owner(s) at the provided address to notify the owner that the department is maintaining their animal(s). Clerical staff will enter a memo in Chameleon indicating the date the form was sent.

Quarantine – Employees shall set the hold type in Chameleon as **Quarantine** and set the hold to **Y** (Yes). The review date shall be set for **10** days from when the bite occurred and may be extended by Los Angeles County Veterinary of Public Health (VPH), if necessary. VPH must have a representative sign off on an animal before release. Employees shall be cautious when handling Quarantined animals.

Disaster – Employees shall set the hold type in Chameleon as **Disaster** and the set the hold to **Y** (Yes). The review date shall be set for thirty (**30)** days from when the animal was booked in. Employees shall obtain as much information about the owner(s) as is available and advise the owner (if possible) as to where the animal will be held. It is at the discretion of the Supervisor (Center Manager or above) to hold an animal after 30 days. The impounding employee must immediately request that Clerical Staff send a notification form no later than the next postal business day to the owner(s) at the last known address or forwarding address if provided, if contact with the owner has not been obtained post-disaster. The Clerical Staff must enter a memo in Chameleon indicating the date the letter was sent.

ANY ANIMAL REGARDLESS OF AVAILIABILITY OR HOLD TYPE CAN BE EUTHANIZED IN THE EVENT THE VETERINARY STAFF FEEL THE ANIMAL IS IRREMEDIABLY SUFFERING.

Appendix C: OPS #12 Microchip Scanning Final

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES

POLICIES and PROCEDURES

Animal Services

MICROCHIP SCANNING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Date Issued: **December 1, 2009 (Rev.)** Division Code: **OPS** **12**

POLICY

To insure every owned animal is returned to its owner as quickly as possible, Department employees will scan every animal to determine if a microchip is present.

PROCEDURE

Any department employee receiving an animal shall scan the animal before it is booked into Chameleon. If a microchip is found, the number shall be recorded in Chameleon by the employee who found the chip. The employee shall immediately place a Possible Owner (PO) hold on the animal. If the chip information is not in Chameleon, contact the correct chip company (i.e. AVID or Home Again) for the owner's info. After researching the chip information, the employee shall place a memo into Chameleon with the correct owner information. The employee shall place a copy of the kennel card into the ACT Supervisor's box and another copy with "Please Send Letter" into the PO Box in the clerical office.

The clerk shall check the memo in Chameleon and send the letter to the address listed in the owner's information memo. The letter will allow 7 days for the new owner to redeem the animal. The clerk shall place a memo in Chameleon with the date the letter was sent and their ID#. The clerk shall change the review date of the animal to 7 days after the letter is sent and update the window. The clerk shall attach the kennel card to a copy of the letter sent and file it by month in the file cabinet.

The Animal Care Technician Supervisor (ACTS) shall take their copy of the kennel card and change the review date on the hard copy to the date in Chameleon. ACTS is also responsible for the continuous monitoring of all PO's at their shelter.

If the owner does not contact LAAS prior to the review date, the animal will be available for adoption.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS (ACO)

ACOs shall scan an animal in the field or at a private veterinarian's facility. This procedure shall be done before the animal is impounded into Chameleon. Officers may unload the animal at a shelter where a veterinarian is located before scanning. Upon finding a chip, the ACO shall follow the procedure as described above.

ANIMAL CARE TECHNICIANS (ACT)

ACTs shall scan any domestic or exotic animal when the animal is received. Employees shall scan an animal an additional time upon any of the following:

- Redemption
- Adoption
- Transfer
- Euthanasia (Includes Died In Kennel)
- Dead on Arrival (DOA)

Should a chip be found, the ACT will follow the procedure as described above to insure the owner is properly notified.

REGISTERED VETERINARIAN TECHNICIANS (RVT)

RVTs shall scan any animal upon all exit evaluations. Should a microchip be found, the RVT will refer the matter to an ACTS who will follow the procedure as noted above to insure the owner is properly notified.

NOTE: All employees shall scan an animal regardless of its condition. Employees may use the pole scanner (long handled) to safely scan an animal when conditions warrant. Animals determined to be too fractious to be scanned by one employee shall not be scanned until additional personnel are available to safely accomplish the task.

Appendix D: OPS #28 New Hope Rescue Partner Alert Program – Revised

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES
POLICIES and PROCEDURES

Animal Services

NEW HOPE RESCUE PARTNER ALERT PROGRAM - REVISED

Date revised: August 1, 2012 Division Code: **OPS** **28.1**

THE PURPOSE of NEW HOPE
The purpose of the New Hope Program is to expand opportunities for Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS)' dogs, cats, and rabbits to find permanent homes by partnering with qualified 501 (c) 3 organizations. The New Hope Program is the means by which LAAS acknowledges, cooperates with, and supports the efforts of partnering animal care, training, rescue, welfare and law enforcement organizations as we all try to find homes for the City's homeless dogs, cats, and rabbits.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the New Hope Rescue Partner Alert Program is to identify the animals that are available for adoption/rescue at a discounted rate.

The New Hope Partner pull rights and privileges **are not transferable**. According to the **New Hope Policies and Procedures** #3, LAAS forbids New Hope Partners from adopting animals in the name of any non-member of the New Hope Program. New Hope partners may not extend adoption privileges in the name of their organization to any person adopting for private or other purposes. If any New Hope Partner transfers any animal adopted from LAAS to any person not a member of the New Hope Partner organization, and if the transfer is not a paid adoption to a private party with a signed Adoption Agreement, then the New Hope Partner shall, within five days of the date of transfer, submit to the ACT Supervisor/New Hope Coordinator the animal's LAAS impound number, the name, group name if any, phone number, and street address of the person to whom the animal was transferred, and the date of transfer.

POLICY

FEES
All New Hope Rescue Partners will pay a single price for a dog, cat, or rabbit as follows:

- $40 – for spay/neuter, whether the surgery can be performed immediately or must be deferred for later. This fee will not be charged if the animal has already been sterilized prior to intake.
- Plus $5.50 – for dog license tax if applicable to the New Hope Rescue Partner's location.

AVAILABILITY

There will be two levels of availability at which New Hope Rescue Partners receive the price above:

- Animals on the New Hope Rescue BLUE or RED Alert will be available at the New Hope Rescue price **the same day that they become available to the public** (i.e., impound day plus four days for strays, and same day as impound day for owner-surrendered).
- With limited exceptions described below, most dogs and cats are available to a New Hope Rescue Partner at the New Hope Rescue price **one day after they become available to the public** (i.e., impound day + five days for strays, impound day plus one day for owner-surrendered animals).

WAIVER OF SPAY/NEUTER CHARGE

New Hope Rescue Partners in good standing who have turned in monthly reports and certificates of sterilization for the three most recent consecutive months that reports were due will be eligible to adopt animals under the New Hope Rescue Program without having to pay the $40 spay/neuter charge when the animal (including a neonate) is deferred because of medical condition.

The New Hope Rescue Partner will be required to timely report on the animal and send the sterilization certificate to the Department upon completion of the surgery (within 30 days after the surgery is performed) unless performed by a veterinarian under the Department's program. New Hope Rescue Partners will retain the option of using the Department's spay/neuter program and paying the $40 fee.

This provision does not apply to healthy animals ready for spay/neuter and adopted by New Hope Rescue Partners whether at the regular or discount price.

EXPANDED NEW HOPE ALERT PROGRAM

Yellow Alert Program

The goal of the YELLOW ALERT Program is to notify New Hope Partners of the animals that are available for New Hope adoption.

All animals that have been available for adoption for 24 hours, (first day), will automatically be placed on YELLOW ALERT on the second day and will be available to New Hope Partners at the discounted price.

- As long as the kennel window has been updated to "available" status, the ACT Supervisor does not need to *place* the animal on YELLOW ALERT, it will be automatically placed on the list.
- All animals on the YELLOW ALERT will be available to New Hope at the discounted price.

- There is no set time limit an animal stays on the YELLOW ALERT, the animal will stay on the alert until adoption or the alert status is changed. (See Blue Alert and Red Alert Programs).
- Interested Parties may place an IP on any YELLOW ALERTED animal, following standard IP protocol.

Red Alert Program

The goal of the RED ALERT Program is to identify to our New Hope Partners those animals that need immediate New Hope adoption due to serious space constraints.

All animals placed on the RED ALERT will be held for a MINUMUM of 48 hours to allow our New Hope Partners to adopt. After 48 hours, any RED ALERTED animal MAY be euthanized without further notice for serious space constraints.

- To place an animal on RED ALERT, an ACT Supervisor will go into the Kennel Window:
    - 24 hour/Medical Field
    - Choose 24 hour
- The ACT Supervisor will then go into memo window and choose as memo type:
    - 24 hour memo
    - No sub type is required
    - Placing a memo in the written memo box is optional
- All animals placed on the RED ALERT will be held for a minimum of 48 hours and an ACT Supervisor **MUST HAVE** the Shelter Captain's signature before any RED ALERTED animal is euthanized.
- Once the animal has been placed on RED ALERT, held a minimum of 48 hours and has been signed off by the Shelter Captain and the ACT Supervisor, the animal may be euthanized without further notice.
- Animals on the RED ALERT will only be euthanized for serious space constraints.
- Interested Parties **WILL NOT** be allowed to place IP's on any RED ALERTED animal.

Blue Alert program

The goal of the BLUE ALERT program is to get animals with medical conditions out of the shelters and into Private Veterinary care as soon as possible.

- Medical staff is responsible for placing animals on BLUE ALERT. Animals that are not yet available for adoption ARE viable candidates for the BLUE ALERT program. (Interested parties may utilize the Good Sam Program or wait for the animal to become available.)

Candidates for the BLUE ALERT should include:

- o Fractures/Dislocations
- o Deglovings/lacerations/wounds/masses that are too severe to be cared for in the shelter
- o Metabolic diseases (Diabetes, liver disease, kidney disease etc...)
- o Generalized Demodex/Scabies cases
- o Other medical cases as staff sees fit to include

- New Hope Partners will be able to take BLUE ALERT animals at the discounted price as soon as the animal is available, instead of having to wait 24 hours.
- To place an animal on BLUE ALERT, Medical staff will go into the Kennel Window:
  - o 24 hour/medical field
  - o Choose MEDICAL
- Medical Staff will then go into the Memo Window:
  - o TYPE= MED ALERT
  - o SUBTYPE = choose from list
    - * MED-FX/LUX
    - * MED-WOUND/MASS
    - * MED-INTERNAL
    - * MED-SKIN
    - * MED-RESPIRATORY
    - * MED-OTHER
  - o Place a brief memo describing the medical problem. (one or two sentences)

- Any animal placed on BLUE ALERT will be kept a MINUMUM of 24 hours after the available date (unless the animal's condition declines such that the Medical staff opts for euthanasia)
- After 24 hours, ANY BLUE ALERTED animal MAY be euthanized, without notice, due to their medical condition or Shelter/Medical space constraints.
- Interested Parties may place an IP on any BLUE ALERTED animal, following standard IP protocol.

EXCEPTIONS TO NEW HOPE RESCUE AVAILABILITY

Some animals will not be placed on the New Hope Rescue Alert for immediate discount. Some animals may not be discounted for New Hope Rescue partners or made available for adoption at all. As noted above, some animals may be removed from the Alert and/or euthanized as conditions dictate. Criteria include:

- Animals, including neonates, that are irremediably suffering or in dying condition, as determined by a veterinarian. Requires Veterinarian signature.
- Stray animals that demonstrate Severe Aggression (can be euthanized immediately after completion of hold period). Requires Center Manager (or, in his/her absence, ACTS) and Veterinarian signatures. A memo must be entered in Chameleon specifying the observed behavior that constitutes severe aggression.

- Neonates that are unable to eat on their own and fostering cannot be arranged within hours or by the end of the business day.
- Neonates in good health, able to eat on their own or with a nursing mother, within 7 days of age that they may be adopted.
- Owner-surrendered animals subsequent to a dangerous animal case when the animal demonstrates severe aggression documented by staff in connection with the case. Requires Center Manager (or, in his/her absence, ACTS) and Veterinarian signatures. Memos must be entered in Chameleon specifying the observed behavior that constitutes severe aggression.

For this policy, "Severe Aggression" is defined as behavior such that, in the opinion of the Center Manager or a Department Veterinarian, the animal constitutes a direct and immediate threat to the safety and welfare of our employees and/or the public.

Appendix E: OPS #01 Adoptable Animals

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES

POLICIES and PROCEDURES

Animal Services

ADOPTABLE ANIMALS

Date Issued: **March 26, 2009** Division Code: **OPS** **1**

POLICY

All Animal Care Centers shall maintain and provide, for public adoption, all available reasonably healthy animals that are temperamentally sound and portray proper behavior and characteristics to be pets for the general public desiring to adopt animals.

PROCEDURE

Animal Service Centers shall maintain as many adoptable animals within the Department's shelter system as space allows, not exceeding the Center's maximum capacity. Each Center's maximum capacity is a predetermined number based on each individual Center's configuration. Employees and supervisors take daily measures to ensure that each Center has ample adoptable animals available at their Center at all times by utilizing the system-wide Department inventory and that the adoptable available animals are well presented and advertised.

Employee's Responsibilities

- **Inventories** - Each Center shall perform daily inventory checks of their animal population to ensure that the animal population at their Center is at or below ten (10) percent of their maximum capacity. Center Managers are responsible for ensuring that the daily inventories are conducted to insure their inventory on Chameleon agrees with their physical inventory of animals.
- **Transferring** - Should a Center fall below ten percent of their maximum capacity, the Center shall contact another Center(s) that is at or near capacity and arrange to transfer animals to their facility.
- **Available/Available Now** – All adoptable available animals shall have their kennel cards stamped "Available"/"Available Now" by the commencement of business on the day that the animal is available, but not prior to the close of business the day before it is available (for hold periods, see Impounding Animals – Procedures SOP).
- **Status of Available** – The "status" of all available animals shall be updated in Chameleon to indicate "available", which causes the animal's information to be listed on our website as available for adoption. The animal's status shall be updated prior to the commencement of business on the day that the animal is available, but not prior to the close of business the day before it is available.
- **Photographed** – If not already photographed, all adoptable available animals shall be attractively photographed and the photograph shall be entered into Chameleon. A new kennel card shall be printed and displayed on the cage/kennel. Poor photographs shall be retaken and replaced in Chameleon. The kennel card shall also be replaced with the new one reflecting the improved photograph.

- **Named – If the adoptable available animal does not have a name,** once the animal becomes available for adoption, the animal shall be given a name. The name shall be listed on the animal's kennel card and entered into Chameleon. Avoid names with negative connotations. Change names that are negative or offensive, e.g. Satan, Hitler, etc.

If an adoptable animal has not been adopted after two weeks of availability, employees shall take into consideration some or all of the tasks listed below. All completed task(s) shall be entered in a memo in Chameleon to document the actions taken.

1. Conduct a Heart to Heart meeting to discuss alternate approaches to helping the animal get adopted (see Heart to Heart SOP).
2. Green list the animal (see Red/Green Listing SOP)
3. Bathe/Groom the animal
4. Change the animal's name (update Chameleon and the animal's kennel card)
5. Re-photograph the animal (update Chameleon and the animal's kennel card)
6. Train/Socialize the animal
7. Notify the New Hope partners via e-mail of the animal's need to be rescued
8. Transfer the animal to another Center or Agency
9. Add a biography to the animal's listing on the Department's website.
10. Post kennel cage with signs (adopt me) or bios of the animal
11. Attract adopter's attention by placing a bandana/collar on the animal
12. Feature the animal as the "Animal of the Week"
13. Spay/Neuter the animal
14. Have the animal attend a Mobile Pet Adoption
15. Relocate the animal in the center to a more prominent cage/kennel
16. Make the animal available via media events and promotions

When sufficient space is available (under 10% of maximum population), only animals that are sick, injured or display aggressive behavior shall be considered for euthanasia (see SOP for Euthanasia Procedures). However, some animals do not adjust well to being confined for extended periods of time. Employees are encouraged to monitor animals daily and to document any unusual behavior both on the kennel card and in Chameleon. All measures shall be taken to prevent an animal from developing behavioral issues due to confinement. Some measures that should be considered when an animal has been impounded for more than a few weeks are:

- Regular Walking Schedule
- Regular Feeding Schedule
- Periodic Socializing Schedule (allow animal to interact with other like animals)

Appendix F: OPS #36 At-Risk Dog Protocol

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES

POLICIES and PROCEDURES

AT-RISK DOG PROTOCOL (180-DAY PILOT)

Date Issued: Division Code: **OPS** **#36**

I. PURPOSE

This At-Risk Dog Protocol aims to accomplish four primary goals: increase lifesaving by clarifying when a dog becomes at risk of euthanasia and pathways out of a City shelter; standardize decision-making across staff and across shelters systemwide when euthanasia decisions become necessary; increase transparency with the public, volunteers and staff about euthanasia decisions; and increase safety and humane care by preventing overcrowding in the shelters.

To accomplish these goals, this Protocol outlines the procedures that Department staff shall use to designate a dog as at-risk of euthanasia and to determine the dog's resulting outcome pathway based on the reason it received the at-risk designation. This Protocol only applies to euthanasia decisions made for behavioral reasons and population management. Euthanasia decisions based on medical conditions are made separately by Department veterinarians.

II. DEFINITIONS

"**At-Risk**" – A designation for a dog in the Department's care that has been scheduled for euthanasia based on criteria established under an At-Risk Category.

"**At-Risk Category**" – A category used to determine when a dog in the Department's care is designated At-Risk, the Department staff authorized to make the designation, the corresponding notification process, timeline for euthanasia, and release restrictions. A complete list of each At-Risk Category is set forth in Section III of this Protocol.

"**Business Day**" – Any day that Department Animal Services Centers are open to the public for at least four hours. Mondays and state or City holidays do not qualify as a Business Day.

"**New Hope Partner**" – A registered 501(c)(3) animal rescue or adoption organization that has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Department to participate in the

Department's New Hope Program to rescue animals before their scheduled euthanasia, and is in good standing pursuant to the terms of the cooperative agreement.

"Level 1 Behavior" – Obnoxious or aggressive behavior (including but not limited to showing teeth, snapping, or growling) but not involving skin contact by teeth.

"Level 2 Bite" – A bite that involves skin contact by teeth but with no skin puncture. However, there may be skin knicks (less than one tenth of an inch deep) and slight bleeding caused by forward or lateral movement of teeth against skin, with no vertical puncture.

"Level 3 Bite" – One to four punctures from a single bite with no puncture deeper than half the length of the dog's canine teeth. There may be lacerations in a single direction, caused by the victim pulling their hand away, an owner pulling the dog away, or gravity (ex. little dog jumps, bites and drops to floor).

"Level 4 Bite" – One to four punctures from a single bite with at least one puncture deeper than half the length of the dog's canine teeth, or more than one Level 3 Bite. May also involve deep bruising around the wound (ex. dog held on for seconds and bore down) or lacerations in both directions (ex. dog held on and shook its head from side to side).

"Level 5 Bite" – A multiple bite incident involving two or more Level 4 Bites.

"Level 6 Bite" – A bite or bites that result in the victim's death.

III. AT-RISK CATEGORIES

Department staff shall use the following list of categories to designate a dog in the Department's care as at At-Risk. Each At-Risk Category describes what Department staff is authorized to make the designation, along with the corresponding timeline for euthanasia, release restrictions, and notification process for a dog placed in the category.

R1 – Dog Declared "Dangerous" Pursuant to Los Angeles Municipal Code ("LAMC")

- Reason for Designation: The General Manager has declared the dog to be a dangerous animal after an administrative hearing process, pursuant to LAMC Sections 53.18.5 and 53.34.4, and the decision is final.
- Staff Authorized to Designate: General Manager only.

- Timeline: The dog is euthanized pursuant to the timeframes set forth in LAMC Section 53.34.4(d)(3).

- Dog's Availability: The dog is ineligible for owner redemption, rescue, adoption, or foster.

- Notification: The dog's owner receives notice of the decision, pursuant to LAMC Section 53.18.5. The dog is not listed on the Department's website and no other notifications are made.

R2 – Dog Relinquished with History of "Dangerous or Vicious Behavior"

- Reason for Designation: The dog has been relinquished to the Department by its owner and staff establishes that the dog has a history of "vicious or dangerous behavior" that is documented by the Department (see California Food and Agriculture Code Section 31108.5(b)). For the purposes of this designation, "vicious or dangerous behavior" means the dog has inflicted an unprovoked Level 4, 5, or 6 Bite on a human, and/or has caused injury to another dog requiring surgical repair or resulting in death of the dog, within the prior 36-month period.

- Staff Authorized to Designate: Animal Care Technician ("ACT") Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff. A District Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff must approve immediate euthanasia prior to expiration of the quarantine period, with rabies testing of remains.

- Timeline: The dog is scheduled for immediate euthanasia upon the At-Risk designation or expiration of any applicable quarantine period, whichever is longer. The dog may be scheduled for euthanasia to occur prior to expiration of the quarantine period if the dog's remains are tested for rabies.

- Dog's Availability: The dog is ineligible for rescue, adoption, or foster.

- Notification: The dog is not listed on the Department's website and no other notifications are made.

R3 – Dog Inflicted Serious Bite(s) Prior to or while in Department Care

- Reason for Designation: The dog has inflicted a Level 4, 5 or 6 Bite on a human; and/or the dog has bitten another dog causing death or injury that necessitated

surgical repair. The bite(s) can have occurred prior to the Department taking the dog into its care, or occur while the dog is in the Department's care.

- Staff Authorized to Designate: ACT Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff. A District Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff must approve immediate euthanasia prior to expiration of the quarantine period, with rabies testing of remains.

- Timeline: The dog is scheduled for euthanasia to occur after expiration of the applicable holding period or quarantine period, whichever is longer. If the holding period has expired, the dog may be scheduled for euthanasia to occur prior to expiration of the quarantine period if the dog's remains are tested for rabies. The staff authorized to make the At-Risk designation may extend the euthanasia date by up to 3 business days, depending on the severity and circumstances of the incident(s).

- Dog's Availability: The dog is eligible to be rescued by a New Hope Partner prior to the scheduled euthanasia, as mandated under California law. Or, on a case-by-case basis, the dog may be rescued by an outside qualified 501(c)(3) rescue organization prior to the scheduled euthanasia. The dog is ineligible for adoption or foster.

- Notification: The dog is placed on a euthanasia list that is sent to all New Hope Partners, and also posted on the Department's website. The dog is not listed on the Department's website as available for adoption or foster. In certain cases, the dog may be euthanized without being placed on the euthanasia list if the severity of the bite(s) indicate the dog is an extreme risk to staff, volunteers, or members of the public (for example, the dog caused severe injury, exhibits uncontrollable aggressive behavior, or there are concerns about the potential spread of disease, such as rabies).

R4 – Department Determines Dog is Unsafe For Handling

- Reason for Designation: Department staff, based on personal observation or recommendation by a Department contractor that is qualified to evaluate dog behavior, or other qualified and reliable source, has determined that a dog is unsafe for handling by Department staff and/or volunteers due to behavior observed while the dog is in the Department's care. Such behavior may include, but is not limited to:

    - Offensive aggression toward humans, particularly sustained aggression (rather than defensive, distance-seeking behavior) when the dog has an

opportunity to flee or avoid.

- Persistent offensive aggression to other dogs.
- The dog initiates altercations with other dogs regardless of the other dogs' behavior, and the altercations are difficult to interrupt.
- Persistent redirected aggression toward other dogs or people that is difficult to interrupt.
- Unpredictable aggression toward other dogs or people.
- Defensive aggression resulting in significant injury to other dogs or people.

- Staff Authorized to Designate: ACT Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff.
- Timeline: If the dog has inflicted a bite that requires quarantine, the dog is scheduled for euthanasia to occur after expiration of the applicable holding period or quarantine period, whichever is longer. If the dog has not inflicted a bite on a human that requires quarantine, the dog is scheduled for euthanasia to occur three business days after the dog is designated as At-Risk in this category. The staff authorized to make the At-Risk designation may extend the euthanasia date up to 3 additional business days, depending on the severity and circumstances of the dog's behavior.
- Dog's Availability: The dog is eligible to be rescued by a New Hope Partner prior to euthanasia, as mandated under California law. Or, on a case-by-case basis, the dog may be rescued by an outside qualified 501(c)(3) rescue organization prior to the scheduled euthanasia. The dog is ineligible for adoption or foster.
- Notification: The dog is placed on a euthanasia list that is sent to all New Hope Partners, and also posted on the Department's website. The dog is not listed on the Department's website as available for adoption or foster.

Y1 – Dog Inflicted Minor Bite(s) Prior to or while in Department Care

- Reason for Designation: The dog has inflicted one or more minor Level 2 Bites, or a single Level 3 Bite, on a human; and/or the dog has bitten another dog causing minor injury or injuries, not necessitating surgical repair.

- Staff Authorized to Designate: ACT Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff.

- Timeline: The dog is scheduled for euthanasia to occur three business days after the dog is designated as At-Risk in this category or the expiration of any applicable quarantine period, whichever is longer. The staff authorized to make the At-Risk designation may extend the euthanasia date up to 5 additional business days, depending on the severity and circumstances of the incident(s).

- Dog's Availability: The dog is eligible for rescue or adoption, prior to the scheduled euthanasia.

- Notification: The dog is placed on a euthanasia list that is sent to all New Hope Partners, and also posted on the Department's website. The dog remains visible for adoption on the Department's website up to the scheduled euthanasia date.

Y2 – Dog's Behavior Declining in Shelter with Safety Concerns

- Reason: The dog's behavior is declining while in the Department's care, and the dog's behavior is presenting safety concerns. This type of behavior includes, but is not limited to, kennel reactivity, redirection, lunging, barking, jumpy, mouthy behavior, and offensive aggression towards people or other dogs.

- Staff Authorized to Designate: ACT Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff.

- Timeline: The dog is scheduled for euthanasia to occur three business days after the dog is designated as At-Risk in this category. The staff authorized to make the At-Risk designation may extend the euthanasia date up to 5 additional business days, depending on the severity and circumstances of the dog's behavior.

- Dog's Availability: The dog is eligible for rescue or adoption prior to the scheduled euthanasia date.

- Notification: The dog is placed on a euthanasia list that is sent to all New Hope Partners, and also posted on the Department's website. The dog remains visible for adoption or foster on the Department's website up to the scheduled euthanasia date.

Y3 –Dog's Behavior Declining in Shelter without Safety Concerns

- Reason for Designation: The dog's behavior and health are declining in the Department's care, but the dog is not presenting safety concerns. This includes but is not limited to, stress-related behaviors such as self-harming or engaging in stereotypies (including pacing, circling, whirling, jumping, wall bouncing, and excessive barking). The dog's behavior and health are not improving despite the Department's best efforts and available resources to improve the dog's condition (e.g., enrichment, and pharmaceutical intervention).

- Staff Authorized to Designate: ACT Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff.

- Timeline: The dog is scheduled for euthanasia to occur five business days after the dog is designated as At-Risk in this category. The staff authorized to make the At-Risk designation may extend the euthanasia date up to an additional 5 business days, depending on the severity and circumstances of the dog's behavior.

- Dog's Availability: The dog is eligible for rescue, adoption, or foster prior to the scheduled euthanasia date.

- Notification: The dog is placed on a euthanasia list that is sent to all New Hope Partners, and also posted on the Department's website. The dog remains visible for adoption or foster on the Department's website up to the scheduled euthanasia date.

G1 – Dog Population Above Capacity for Care

- Reason for Designation: The total population of dogs in the Department's care at the City's six Animal Services Centers has exceeded the Department's overall kennel capacity, there are no dogs in the Department's care that are currently designated as At-Risk, and the overpopulation is impacting the Department's ability to adequately care for the animals in its facilities. For the purposes of this designation, "overall kennel capacity" means the total number of kennels at the six Department operated Animal Services Centers that are designated for the general housing of dogs, and not including kennels designed for temporary holding purposes such as for isolation or quarantine.

- Staff Authorized to Designate: District Supervisor or higher-ranked Department staff.

- Timeline: The dog is scheduled for euthanasia to occur five business days after the dog is designated as At-Risk in this category. The staff authorized to make the At-Risk designation may extend the euthanasia date up to 5 business days.

- Dog's Availability: The dog is eligible for rescue, adoption, or foster prior to the scheduled euthanasia date.

- Notification: The dog is placed on a euthanasia list that is sent to all New Hope Partners, and also posted on the Department's website. The dog remains visible for adoption or foster on the Department's website up to the scheduled euthanasia.

IV. PROCEDURE

The Department's shelter staff must evaluate all dogs in the Department's care to determine if and when a dog qualifies for designation as At-Risk under one of the At-Risk Categories listed in Section III of this Protocol. The evaluations and resulting At-Risk designations may occur upon intake of a dog or at any time while the dog is in the Department's care, including while a dog is being fostered.

1. At-Risk Designation During Dog's Intake

   The Department's intake staff must evaluate and collect as much information as possible about each dog that enters the Department's care to determine if the dog should be designated as At-Risk based on the criteria set forth in the At-Risk Categories.

   - Upon intake of an **owner-relinquished** dog, staff shall gather as much information as possible about the dog's behavioral history, including history of bites on humans and other animals, from the owner and any other reliable sources. This shall also include evidence of any mitigating factors, such as provocation or the time that has passed since any incidents. Staff must use the Department's Animal Intake form (uploaded into Chameleon) for these purposes.

   - Upon intake of a **stray dog**, staff shall gather as much information as possible about the dog's behavioral history from available witnesses, other Department staff, Department databases, or any other reliable source. This shall also include evidence of any mitigating factors, such as provocation or time that has passed since any incidents. Staff must use the Department's Animal Intake form (uploaded into Chameleon) for these purposes.

- Staff shall carefully consider the incoming dog's behavioral history and observations made during the intake process to determine if the dog meets the criteria under one of the At-Risk Categories and, if so, what category should be assigned to the dog (e.g., R1, R2, R3). Staff shall then bring their At-Risk designation recommendation to an ACT Supervisor for consideration. Staff shall include information about any identified mitigating factors in each recommendation.

2. At-Risk Designation while Dog is in Department's Care

   The Department's shelter staff must continuously monitor all dogs in the Department's care to determine if and when a dog should be designated At-Risk based on biting incidents, other observed behavior, or the dog's overall wellbeing.

   Staff shall carefully consider each dog's behavioral history to determine if the dog meets the criteria under one of the At-Risk Categories and, if so, what category should be assigned to the dog (e.g., R3, R4, Y1). Staff shall then bring their At-Risk designation recommendation to an ACT Supervisor for consideration. Staff shall include information about any identified mitigating factors in each recommendation.

3. Supervisor's Final At-Risk Determination

   ACT Supervisors, the District Supervisor, and/or higher-ranking Department staff are responsible for reviewing and making a final decision on recommended At-Risk designations.

   - ACT Supervisors or other authorized staff shall review each recommendation to determine if a dog should be designated At-Risk, and under what At-Risk Category. The ACT Supervisor or other authorized staff must follow-up with staff to make clarifications or to collect additional information, and consider any mitigating factors, as necessary to make a fully informed determination. An ACT Supervisor or other authorized staff may also make an At-Risk determination based on their own personal observations and information gathering.

   - All At-Risk designations shall be documented in Chameleon and be supported with detailed notes explaining the reasons and basis for the designation. Upon making the designation, the ACT Supervisor or other authorized staff shall schedule the applicable euthanasia date for the assigned At-Risk Category. The designating staffer shall also apply the

appropriate restriction on the dog's availability for rescue, adoption, foster, or other handling based on the assigned At-Risk Category.

4. Daily Review Prior to Euthanasia

Every morning, the ACT Supervisor at each Animal Services Center shall review the most current euthanasia list to ensure all dogs are properly listed, using the following procedure:

- Print out the Pre-Euthanasia Report from Chameleon.
- Review Chameleon for any updated memos on each dog listed on the Pre-Euthanasia report.
- Confirm that the "Review Date" is the current day.

Appendix G: NACA Formula for Determining Shelter Staffing Needs

Formula for Determining Kennel Staffing Needs

_____ (Incoming Animals Per Year)	Divided by 365 (days per year)	_____ (Incoming Animals Per Day)
_____ (Incoming Animals Per Day)	Times Four* Day Holding Period =	_____ (Animals in Shelter Per Day)
_____ (Animals in Shelter Per Day)	Times fifteen minutes** per animal =	_____ (Number of Minutes Needed)
_____ (Minutes Needed)	Divided by 60 (minutes) =	_____ (Number of Hours Needed)
_____ (Number of Hours Needed)	Divided by 3*** (hours for cleaning/feeding) =	_____ (Staff Needed Per Day)

This formula is intended as a guideline. Any individual facility may require more or less kennel personnel to meet, or exceed, minimum care standards.

* The HSUS is using the average holding period of four days as a basis for this study. Some animals may be held for a much shorter period; however, many animals may be held for a period exceeding the four day requirement.

** This formula is based on a per-animal time of nine minutes for cleaning and six minutes for feeding.

*** These three hours are solely for the performance of these two tasks, but allowing for further time in the day to perform routine maintenance tasks such as laundry, dishes, lost and found checks, etc.

Appendix H: LAAS Volunteer Rules and Guidelines

RULE AND GUIDELINES

I wish to participate as a volunteer with the City of Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS), and hereby agree to abide by the following rules and guidelines:

1. As a volunteer, I will always treat all animals in our care humanely.
2. I am representing the City of Los Angeles and the Department of Animal Services as a volunteer, and will demonstrate appropriate behavior and communication with staff, other City employees and the public and follow the City's standards of conduct.
3. I will not be rude or use inappropriate language to the public or to any full/part-ti m e staff.
4. **I will volunteer at least 6 hours a month.**
5. I will wear a volunteer t-shirt and my ID badge at all times when volunteering at the shelter, at an event, or at a mobile adoption.
6. **I will sign in at the shelter kiosk at the beginning of my shift, prior to performing any volunteer duties, and will sign out at the end of my shift.**
7. When participating in a Mobile Pet Adoption event, I will sign in and out on the Sign In sheet provided.
8. **I will wear protective clothing for working with animals, which includes pants, a shirt with sleeves and close toed shoes. No shorts, sandals, leggings, tights, tube or tank tops are allowed.**
9. **Substance abuse, including alcohol and drugs, is not permitted at any shelter or Mobile Adoption. I understand that the shelters are a smoke free environment and if I would like to smoke, I will step outside the building.**
10. **I WILL report any incidents (bites, scratches, or injuries) immediately to a staff member.**
11. **I will carefully read each and every kennel card prior to handling any animal to ensure that it is "available". Before walking an animal with a yellow (BH) mark, I will get permission from an ACT supervisor each time, even if I have walked that animal before.**
12. I am not to tell, nor will I tell a potential adopter, for any reason, that an animal is going to be euthanized unless it is adopted.
13. I understand that Volunteers are not allowed on LAAS Center premises during nonbusiness hours unless approved by a staff member.
14. I will not undermine the efforts of LAAS staff to perform their duties, nor interfere during any interaction/transaction between staff and a member of the public at any time, and I understand that I should not distract or interfere with members of any construction or repair crew.
15. I will not speak on behalf of the City of Los Angeles or LAAS, or give the impression that I am doing so, without direct authorization from LAAS. I will direct any media inquiries intended for the City or LAAS to the Public Relations Director.
16. City vehicles are only to be driven by an authorized user. Authorized users include ACTs (Animal Care Technician), ACOs (Animal Control Officer) and other Department employees.
17. Transferring animals between LAAS Centers is not allowed, unless the transfer has been approved by the supervisors of all shelters involved and a Department Veterinarian.
18. I understand that Volunteers do not have a right to select who is suitable to adopt an animal. (This rule also applies to Animal Services' employees.)
19. I understand that I am not to offer/promise any extra assistance to potential adopters to get an animal adopted and any arrangements I make will be MY personal responsibility to deliver.
20. If I am a member of a rescue organization, animal service business or other related animal organization, **I will keep in mind to avoid conflict of interest at all times (see below).**

21. **If I have any problems or concerns, I will follow the chain of command. I will address my issues to the Volunteer Liaison.** If the shelter does not have a liaison or staff can't resolve the issue, I will address my issue to the ACT Supervisor and then to the Director of Volunteer Programs.

I understand that Volunteers who fail to follow the above rules and guidelines may be suspended or terminated. In addition to the above, the following must also be observed by volunteers:

INITIAL *

Audit Services Division

The Office of the Controller was created by the Los Angeles City Charter as an independent office, and is headed by the Controller: the elected auditor, paymaster, and chief accounting officer for the City of Los Angeles. Under the Controller's leadership, the Office's Audit Services Division performs audits, investigations, and other oversight functions to help provide transparency, accountability, and improve City services for all Angelenos.

Contact

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Copies of our audit reports are available at https://controller.lacity.gov/audits